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ABSTRACT

This special journal issue focuses on writing in the elementary school. Topics discussed in the various articles include (1) a technique for teaching persuasive composition, (2) writing in the second and third grades, (3) correlating writing assignments with the study of literature, (4) a problem solving approach to composition, (5) the Virginia Writing Project, (6) how to deal with censorship, (7) grading student writing, (8) the child as bookmaker, and (9) the teaching of grammar. In addition, the journal provides a brief selection of teaching ideas designed to improve student writing. (HTH)

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VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Spring 1981

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Virginia English Bulletin

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1981

Focus: STUDENT WRITING IS ALIVE! Dedicated to Foster B. Gresham

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TWO STACKS LATER: VATE Heritage

Alan M. McLeod

In some ways this is a column difficult to write. One of my professional mentors, a man on whom I depended so much for advice, and who so willingly and gently shared his vast wisdom with me and others in VATE and English teaching, died just before the new year. Fortunately, the other mentor, a long-time friend of Foster's, agreed to write a tribute about the man who had in his heart always a sense of the richness of studying English and a desire that it be an exciting experience taught well to the young people of this Commonwealth and across the nation. Dick Meade's comments about the life of Foster Gresham and his influence on VATE are well worth the reading. So, too, are the excerpts taken from Foster's final column, found in its customary place near the end of the *Bulletin*.

It is fitting that this issue of the *Bulletin* be dedicated to Foster, for in it are represented more English teachers grades K-12 than ever before. Think of the name—Foster. Think of the meaning of that name when used as a verb: *nurture, promote, cultivate, cherish, encourage*. Foster Gresham did all of these actions with zest. He found delight in the accomplishments of others and welcomed the contributions of teachers at all school levels. The efforts of teachers in promoting student learning and writing and the work of the Virginia Writing Project form the substance of this issue. They are efforts which have been *fostered* in the spirit of the man to whom so many of us are indebted. We have a heritage to carry forward, and we can take pride that Foster Gresham helped show us the way.

This issue has as its focus STUDENT WRITING IS ALIVE! Nearly 80 manuscripts were submitted, and we were able to publish 47 different authors, including students. Many of the articles present specific teaching strategies, and three should be of particular interest to elementary teachers. The issue has been an exciting one to organize, although I have been compelled to condense most manuscripts to make room for those recommended by the editorial board. In condensing, I have tried to retain the intent of the authors.

Leila Christenbury has graciously agreed to guest edit the winter issue, and her call for manuscripts appears elsewhere in this number. I hope you will provide her with the manuscripts to make the winter edition as exciting and helpful as the one edited by Patricia Kelly. Yes, Pat now knows why I smiled that day—because I knew how well she would carry out the editing responsibility. We are fortunate to have Pat as VATE's president this year, for she will help us take Foster Gresham's legacy forward.

IN MEMORIAM

Foster Bagwell Gresham, 1905-1980

President of VATE, 1951
Editor, *Virginia English Bulletin*, 1952-1959
Executive Secretary of VATE, 1958-1977

Former teacher of English at Emporia High School, Randolph-Macon Academy, Charlottesville School for Boys, Lane High School, and Longwood College.

Tribute to "Mr. Vate": Foster B. Gresham

When Foster Gresham died on December 26, 1980, I lost a true personal and professional friend, the Virginia Association of Teachers of English lost a leader of surpassing magnitude, English teaching in Virginia lost a master teacher—one with superior teaching skill, and the education of teachers of English lost an English Education colleague who ever pointed prospective teachers of English in the right direction.

I had the privilege of having many professional conversations with Foster, and I always profited from those conversations. I feel that I also gained from them real insight into his value as a teacher of English and as a teacher educator. I had the privilege, too, of teaching for a number of years in the same school with him in Charlottesville, and I know how much the boys and girls in that school thought of him. I knew it from their comments, and I knew it from the expressions on their faces when they spoke his name. His teaching, like everything else he did, was marked by a special creativity and keen selfless enthusiasm. We can say with Shakespeare, we "shall not look upon his like again."

FOSTER B. GRESHAM—the name is synonymous with GROWTH for the Virginia Association of Teachers of English. For two decades he

guided the business of VATE as its first executive secretary, and then after his retirement from the position in 1977, VATE members continued to turn to him for help with details of the business of the organization. The ready comment was, "Ask Foster." Of course, he could not really retire as a VATE member, because in 1974 in the annual meeting of that year in Williamsburg he was honored with a life membership in the organization.

Foster was a key figure in the growth of VATE that made the office of executive secretary a necessity. Foster became president of VATE in 1951, and in the short span of seven years, he had furnished the leadership to propel the organization by 1958 from a struggling membership of about one hundred teachers to over two thousand.

During his term as president the *Virginia English Bulletin*, now a thriving journal-type publication, was first printed. After one year Foster took over as editor, and the publication became better and better. The *Bulletin* evidenced the growth that was taking place. With both the editorship and the position of executive secretary on his hands, Foster found that he had to relinquish one of them. He was persuaded to continue as executive secretary, a place in which VATE sorely needed him.

As executive secretary Foster was interested in furthering the various activities of VATE, but he was especially eager to increase the membership and, in general, to have VATE become the most thriving organization of subject matter teachers in Virginia. He began a plan to cause VATE to spread across the Commonwealth and to have teachers in various parts of the state vie with each other to become members. The Virginia Education Association, of which VATE was at one time a section and is now a department, is divided into districts, each one designated by a letter. For example, the area around Richmond was District C; around Harrisonburg, District G; around Roanoke, District P. He conceived the idea of having the English teachers in each district organize themselves as an affiliate of VATE. And so CATE, GATE, PATE, and others were born. Usually there was an English teachers' session as a part of an annual day-long program of the district. Thus the nucleus was there for a bona-fide organization for English teachers, which would become an affiliate of VATE.

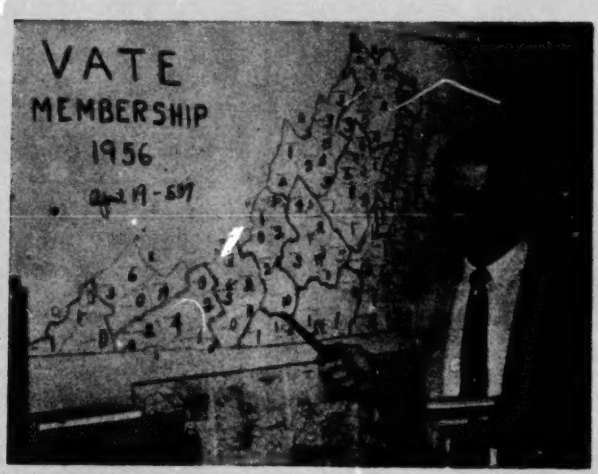
Foster kept affiliate membership records to promote interest and to show the parts of the state needing most attention, all this without benefit of an office staff. To compensate he pressed his wife Merrill into service, so that with her faithful assistance he could realize the success of his plans for VATE. Results for VATE came from the combination of Foster's creative ideas with his characteristics of perseverance, persistence, and enthusiasm, all of which he applied to whatever undertaking claimed his interest and attention. His cheerful, winsome personality produced the faithful following of his policies; his magnetism brought others into the act.

As if the development of the *Virginia English Bulletin* and his leadership in the growth of the association were not enough in themselves, he gave the teaching of English in Virginia a point of reference for future attainment through making a survey published in 1955 under the title *The Teaching of English in Virginia High Schools*. This undertaking was a fulltime effort under the auspices of the Ford Foundation while he was on leave of absence from his teaching, then at Lane High School, in Charlot.esville.

Devotion was a watchword with Foster Gresham—devotion to his profession, devotion to VATE, devotion to the boys and girls in the schools, and devotion to the education of their teachers.

VATE so revered Foster B. Gresham that in 1977 the Foster B. Gresham Award was established to go each year to an English teacher in the schools of Virginia selected by VATE as the Teacher of the Year. To name this award for him recognized the indebtedness of the association to him and exemplified at the same time what Foster B. Gresham meant to the teaching of English in Virginia—EXCELLENCE.

RICHARD A. MEADE
University of Virginia



Student Writing Is Alive

CHARLOTTE BYRD
Liberty High School
Bedford

I am an ardent crusader in search of a platform and an audience, for I am an English teacher who believes in the formidable power of composition. Composition is the most effective way to synthesize vocabulary study, critical thinking, grammar skills, reading, listening and speaking skills. "Heresy!" cry my colleagues. "Students must be able to underline the nouns and verbs before they can write sentences or paragraphs or essays."

Just try it, I challenge. Ask them to write, and see what happens.

What usually happens, of course, when a teacher asks a reluctant student to write a composition is that the student responds with: "I can't think of anything. I can't write a composition. What's a composition anyway?"

A composition is something that takes too long to grade, is what the teacher may think, but she saves her comment for the teacher's lounge where she is sure to find sympathetic agreement.

Most teachers have experienced the frustrations of unwilling writers, two sentence paragraphs, one paragraph compositions, papers that were eaten by the neighbor's dog or fed by Mom to the trash compactor, or the student who categorically refuses to write because he will never have to use it in "real life." These negations and refusals stem from a lack of confidence: students lack confidence about expressing ideas on paper, and teachers often lack confidence in their ability to inspire students to write.

The first task in teaching writing is to instill confidence in students. One way to interest your students in writing is to write something yourself: show students how you may start with nothing but a topic suggestion and create a coherent paragraph or essay. Many students, when asked to write about subjects dealing with their own experiences and observations, are ignorant about where to begin because the only type of composition they may have attempted involved reading what someone else had written and reporting on the information. One day as I explained to a class that anything can be a subject for a writer, a defiant student challenged, "I'll bet you can't write anything about that piece of chalk in your hand." Though the suggestion had materialized from a very unfriendly source, I knew that my credibility was on the line.

"Give me just one minute to organize my thoughts," I answered. Then I wrote the following paragraph on the board:

> Resting idly in the tray beneath the chalkboard, this piece of chalk is just another classroom prop. But when I pick it up, it becomes a messenger,

an instrument of instruction. The lines and symbols that it leaves behind as it glides smoothly across the slate answers questions, asks questions, informs Charlie that his library book is overdue. Animated by a human, the chalk is no longer just a prop, it becomes a performer.

Having an example of what they were expected to produce and witnessing the creation of that product before their very eyes convinced some students that composition might not be the monster they had previously feared. After my demonstration I felt that I was closer to persuading students they could write and that their classmates, teachers and parents were interested in what they had to say. The next step was to help students choose topics that would require specific details rather than broad generalizations.

On the board we listed topics suggested by members of the class. Student ideas generated discussions that helped spark the imagination. Topics ranged from "Things About Other People That Bother Me Most" to "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Owning an Automobile." Finally, we decided that any topic in our list could be developed in three or four paragraphs. I outlined several writing plans for the most popular topics and students who had earlier voiced their displeasure and doubt about the assignment began to see possibility of success in this task.

I required students to submit their first drafts for my inspection. The papers were not graded until each author had a chance to revise according to my suggestions for content enrichment and for correcting technical errors. The first writing assignment was arduous, but the methodical approach laid the groundwork for later projects and also gave the weaker students confidence in their ability to produce a composition. Delaying the grading process de-emphasizes mechanical accuracy, but it relieves the problem of writing paralysis by eliminating such excuses for not writing as, "I know what I want to say, but I don't know how to say it or where to start."

As students write their first drafts, I stress specific detail, vocabulary and figurative language. Spelling, punctuation and sentence structure can best be dealt with through revision and rewriting. Strong writers who have little to revise are a helpful resource during the rewriting stages. They can offer suggestions, explain why something needs to be changed, and serve as a sounding board for the ideas of students who need the reassurance of a second opinion. Students should be encouraged to use the handbook section of grammar texts for punctuation rules, and to use the dictionary to correct their spelling errors. You can make novice writers conscious of specific expression by pointing out passages in literature that are particularly rich in detail and example; or have students work in small groups to create a detailed paragraph about a character in a story, an incident that recently occurred at school, or a description of the classroom. Judge the paragraphs by the number of specific details that convey the idea or create an image. Allow the

members of the winning group to serve as judges in the next writing contest.

Recently, my English 10 students wrote four-paragraph compositions. The following selection is particularly strong in detailed description; it was formulated through the draft-revise-rewrite sequence and the group exercises stressing specific details.

PEOPLE WATCHING

A friend and I were sitting on a park bench in front of the Air-Space Museum in Washington D. C. We were exhausted from running around all day, so we decided to watch people.

Washington draws a lot of tourists, so this was a great place to play sociologist. We spotted the same "crazy" lady who had sat beside us at lunch. During lunch, she sat down at our table with her coffee, lit up a cigarette, took a sip of coffee, took a puff on her cigarette, got up and left. Now she was shaking hands with someone she obviously didn't know.

The Washington residents can usually be picked out of the crowds: the three-piece-suited men walking as if they were in a hurry, the man preaching on the steps, the streetside merchants patiently waiting a customer, the dedicated jogger running up and down the mall, the policeman keeping an eye on the man who is preaching.

Taking a look at all these different people makes one wonder if there's anyone who has an exact replica. What if everyone were an exact replica of everyone else? I, for one, am thankful everyone is different!

CARTER GARRETT

Figurative language, which adds variety and interest to student compositions, can be introduced easily in a poetry unit. Rather than asking students to write an entire poem, however, ask them to use simile, metaphor or personification to say something about an everyday object. I list student suggestions on the board to help focus their thoughts and to generate discussion. Our lists contain such things as a locker, the clock, a face, chewing gum, a rock, the moon, a wall, a book. Here are some examples of the original lines composed by tenth graders:

—My locker is a whirlwind with papers flying and books scattered.
PAUL NORTON

—A rock is like a lazy person. It just sits around. The only difference is that a rock doesn't eat or breathe.
DAVID MEADOR

—Bubble gum is like life: you stretch it too far and, "pop," it's over.
CHARLES KLOTZ, III

—A face is like a moon, craters and crevices about the place. It is never absolutely smooth with its hills and caves being the eyes and mouth.
ROBERT BURKS

—A book is a computer: it doesn't send answers out in binary math, but in regular language that the computer in our heads understands.
FRANK THOMAS

Getting students involved in their own language—its richness and flexibility, its mystery and its truth—is a goal well worth pursuing. I have found composition a most comfortable and efficient vehicle for arriving at that goal

"Letters to the Editor": Persuasive Composition

JOANNE C. LAIPPLY
Deep Creek High
Chesapeake

Knowing that motivation is the key to successful writing, I turned to the daily newspaper as a source of "real" topics for students' compositions. At the time we were beginning a unit on persuasive writing. The logical place for such topics in the newspaper is the editorial page which is rife with opinion.

As I handed out copies of the editorial section to the students, I had vague ideas of analyzing the editorials as to thesis, organization, supporting details, and effectiveness. The students, however unknowingly, changed my plans when they showed immediate interest in the letters to the editor: those letters were the very thing to motivate the students. After I explained that anyone could write a letter to the editor, and that the purpose was to provide a public forum for the average citizen's opinion, they began to read the letters with a more critical eye. Without prompting, they passed the letters to friends and made positive and negative comments. Remarks ranged from, "Can you believe this guy really said this?" to "Now here's someone who knows what she's talking about!" With this natural enthusiasm as a start, it was easy to develop a series of activities that would help students discover the nature of effective persuasive writing.

These are the activities I used to help students understand the idea of the thesis and the need for specific supporting details. As a by-product, they became familiar with many current, controversial topics and found constructing the persuasive composition a relatively painless process.

1. The students read letters to the editor and note the subject and author's position. The term "thesis" can be effectively introduced at this point.
2. Each student selects a most effective letter and least effective one, noting reasons for the choices.
3. In groups of four to six, the students decide on the best and worst of the selected letters. On a separate paper, they note the thesis of each and list the supporting details. The diversity of opinion in group discussion usually precludes students' choosing as best only letters they agree with. The teacher can help students identify supporting details by asking questions such as "How does the writer prove his point?"
4. Each group presents the best and worst letters chosen, states the thesis of each and lists on the board the supporting details. Then they draw a conclusion as to why one letter is effective and the other is not. It may be necessary for the teacher to ask questions directed at discovery of the concrete and specific.
5. After the oral reports have been presented, students choose a subject from one of the letters about which they have strong opinions, write the opinion on the subject, and list ideas to support their positions.
6. After choosing the best ideas from the list and organizing them into a

logical sequence, each student drafts a letter to the editor. This draft is proofread by at least two classmates and edited as needed.

7. The student writes a final copy of the letter and submits it to the teacher for credit. Extra credit is given to those who actually mail their letters to the newspaper. Several of the students' letters were published, including the following samples, and I displayed them on the bulletin board.

German Needed

To the Editor:

Can someone please answer a simple question for me? Why is it that the only foreign languages taught in Chesapeake schools are Spanish and French?

There are students interested in taking a foreign language but not necessarily these two. A suggested alternative is German. It is fun and quite easy to learn, so why not give it a chance?

TRISHA CLARK
Chesapeake

November 7, 1980

Forget Not

Editor, Virginia-Pilot:

It seems to me that America has taken this issue of the hostages in Iran and put it in a closet to try to forget about it.

Well, fellow Americans aren't an issue; they are people—*our* people—and they shouldn't be forgotten or even put aside.

Even though there is little we can do at present, we should keep in mind the kinds of lives these men are being forced to live. We should never lose hope that they will be rescued, for if *we* lose hope, think of what *they* lose.

ROBIN MIMMS,
Age 15

Chesapeake.
September 27, 1980

Too Much News

Editor, Virginia-Pilot:

Why must the radio stations have two hours of continuous news every morning? I would like to hear more music while I get ready for school every morning.

I realize that news is a vital part of our lives, for it helps keep us informed about the world around us; but one or two news stations would be sufficient. The different stations also seem to have the same news.

I believe the radio stations would have more listeners if they would play more music.

LISA M. STEWART.

Student Writing Is Alive in the 2nd and 3rd Grades

DOROTHY M. RICE
Blackwell Primary School
Richmond

Yes, student writing is alive! And one way to keep it alive is to give them lively ways to express themselves. Alliteration is one of the ways that my second and third grade students were turned on. Some of the students were familiar with the tongue twister about Peter Piper's pickled peppers and they seemed to enjoy reciting it; but few had ever tasted pickled peppers; and fewer still had ever tasted their own home-made tongue twister.

The children easily identified the tongue twister as having mostly words that had the same beginning letter. I recited Laura E. Richards' "Eletelephony," which delighted the ears of the little dears. They wanted to create their own sentences or stories using the beginning sound of their first name. Naturally some wanted to use their middle name or even a nickname. They also had to include things that they really enjoyed eating or playing. They had to think of synonyms, but everyone shared in the task. After writing, the children begged to illustrate their stories. Here are some examples:

> Charles likes to fix chairs and chase chickens. He has eight children and chews tobacco chunks. He chooses horses and he chains up his goat... Charles Edmunds—second grade
>
> Ronald and Rodney are already at reading. Ronald got a red toy racing car. The teacher caught him with it. When Ronald got home he was glad he was at home! Romondo Monroe-second grade
>
> Catena Cuberton starts with a capital letter. Cuberton is Catena's last name. Catena cut the cucumber. Catena caught the cucumbers so that she could get a job on Concord Road. Catena Parker-second grade

Reading the newspaper, I realized headlines and advertisements consisted mainly of alliteration. So, a followup activity was to search the newspaper for examples of alliteration, which the students did with the fervor of goldminers. They cut out their collections and arranged them in designs which they mounted on construction paper; thereby completing their language/art assignment in alliteration.

Great English Teaching Ideas: Student Writing Can Come Alive

BETH BOONE
Huguenot High School

ADA S. HILL
Manchester High School

Why do we teach writing? How can we best teach writing? For that matter, what is writing anyway? Students that we asked recently said writing:

. . . gives us a way to be different from one another.
. . . helps me relax.
. . . is a way of expressing my feelings. I used to express what I felt by talking to my pet bird, but it died. By writing, I can get all of my thoughts out.
. . . gives me a way to holler without making someone angry.

None of the students questioned responded that writing helped them perfect the 3-2-8 or "key-hole" paragraph, or the pro-and-con, two-paragraph, or five-paragraph paper; none mentioned the benefits of being able to write like E. B. White or Joan Didion. They did, however, say that writing "aids in the evaluation of ideas" and is "essential in the organization of thoughts."

Our students inherently know what we as teachers sometimes fail to perceive. Writing is a process that can be used in a variety of ways. Recent research has emphasized the importance of "the composing process;" there appears to be general acceptance of three distinct composing stages: prewriting, writing, and revision. Thus far, neither the research nor the stages have really helped the student who is learning to compose.

A few days spent focusing on both the researchers' discoveries and the students' unique composing processes could counter the gap between research and practice. Students enjoy learning that their periods of procrastination can be a productive part of the prewriting stage; many will be relieved to know that at least one study indicates good writers spend more of their composing time exhibiting nervous behaviors than do poor writers. The knowledge that revision can wait may free those students whose internalized fear of error prevents almost any writing, and revision viewed as an important process in itself may result in more than mechanical error correction.

An understanding of the way our students compose, when and under what conditions they compose best, can help us as we plan, assign, instruct, and evaluate their written products. We may learn that some of our students cannot compose without ample time to talk about their ideas; others need quiet and solitude before they can do their best. The lessons learned will vary from student to student, but the result is worth the effort.

To learn more about each student's process, observe as they write, ask about their composing habits, have them jot random thoughts and worries on a piece of scratch paper while they work on an in-class essay, or try a sentence completion exercise like the one included in this column.

This column contains ideas to help with student motivation, prewriting and writing. The ideas evolving from rhetorical elements like audience or purpose may be especially useful because many students seem to be better writers when their assignments include a clearly defined audience, a manageable point of view, a specified purpose, or a way to track down the best word choice. The ideas are not ends in themselves; they can be, when coupled with your ideas, a means to the end you want: an improvement in your students' writing!

COMPOSITION — discovery of the composing process

Please complete each sentence as quickly and honestly as possible.

1. I feel best about writing for a teacher who _____
2. I like to write about _____
3. Before I write, I _____
4. When I am writing, I worry about _____
5. I could write better if _____
6. When I'm asked to write a paragraph or composition, I feel _____
7. Writing makes me happy when _____
8. If I'm asked to write a composition that will be due in two weeks, I'll probably begin _____
9. I usually revise by _____
10. My writing would really improve if _____
11. A classroom can be a good place for writing if _____

COMPOSITION — audience awareness

To help students learn how to write a thank-you note as well as how to direct themselves to an audience, have them write "Aunt Hortense" notes. Cut out pictures of absurd or impractical items from old magazines or catalogs. Tell students, as they are each presented with an item, that the item is a gift from their rich Aunt Hortense, who will bequeath her millions to the student who writes the nicest thank-you note. Students must mention the gift specifically and make special mention of how it will be used or enjoyed (without lying). This exercise teaches students how to be tactful and diplomatic and how to be creative, especially when the gifts are items like flagpoles, exercise machines, and children's wading pools. The writer of the best letter could be given a *$100,000* candy bar.

Leigh Crank Haynes, Chesterfield

COMPOSITION motivation

The writing sample is an indispensable tool for the composition teacher. Many students, however, nervous in the beginning of their composition class, often fail to produce lively, representative pieces of writing on short notice, under a time deadline, and with full knowledge that this writing will somehow "place" them—at least as a preliminary—in the teacher's mind.

For my writing sample, I give the students about 20 minutes, stressing that the sample is for my information only, will not be graded, and will not influence the student's final grade in the course.

I then discuss the joys of being negative and give students a choice of one of the following "twisted topics": What I Didn't Do on My Summer (or Christmas or Spring) Vacation; What I Didn't Learn in High School (or Junior High School); What I Don't Expect from Life; Why I Don't Want to Be a _____ (whatever).

My students have responded enthusiastically, even with chuckles, to the topics, giving me a better opportunity to assess their first writing fairly.

Leila Christenbury, Harrisonburg

COMPOSITION composing process, p. 2

12. The thing that I worry about most when I write is _____
13. If I never had to write another composition, I'd _____
14. I can't write unless I first of all _____
15. A classroom is a bad place for writing if _____
16. When I get back a composition that has been graded and written on by a teacher or theme reader, I feel _____
17. A better time for a teacher to make corrections and suggestions _____
18. I can't write well when _____
19. When I am writing, I think about _____
20. I revise and proof-read _____

Beth Boone, Richmond

COMPOSITION motivation

When students lament that they have nothing to write about, it's time to "motivate a memory." One simple trigger is a box of cracker jacks. Let students taste the kernels, listen to the crunch, and feel the stickiness. Then ask: When did you last eat cracker jacks? Where were you? Who was with you? Other items like a set of party supplies, a whistle, or a variety of masks will accomplish the same end.

The following memory motivator is more ambitious, but works particularly well. Set up a circus. Provide ample visuals (a tent, a carousel, a set of miniature animals) and audial effects with circus records. Excite the tastebuds with circus fare. Ask the students to focus on a dominant impression and let them respond in their own form: prose, poetry or drama. Memory writing is important for everyone. It forces us to think about life, and often allows us to discover something new.

Meta Potts, Frederick County

COMPOSITION prewriting

This idea enables students to write about abstractions concretely, encourages the use of metaphors and personification, and provides a positive vehicle for the expression of anger.

Ask students to think of something that ought to be caged in the GREAT ZOO. Anything might be considered a possible candidate except people and real animals. War, fear, lies, racism, divorce, and competency tests might easily be put behind the zoo's bars. Use the following questions to guide the writing of either a poem, an essay, or a short story.

What is it?
Why should it be included?
What does it eat, or what is its prey?
Why is it dangerous?

Gloria Rothman, Fairfax County

COMPOSITION purpose

This group writing exercise will help students understand that there can be many purposes for writing about the same topic. To begin, divide the class into several groups of five or six students. Give each group the same topic (for example, frogs) but a different purpose for the writing. Purposes might include: 1. convincing the reader that the frog is a beautiful creature, 2. convincing the reader that the frog is repulsive, 3. convincing the reader that a frog would make a good pet, and 4. describing the metamorphosis of a frog.

After each group has collectively written a paper, let students read them aloud. Ask the class to determine the purpose of each writing and the ways in which language was employed to fulfill the purpose. The activity will increase students' awareness that a clear statement of purpose PRIOR to the writing will enable them to use language more advantageously.

Ellen Griffin, Henrico County

COMPOSITION point of view

Students are told they are aliens from outer space. They land their spaceship near the school where either (1) a football game or (2) a school dance is going on. As aliens, they have no concept of what they are watching, but they must report exactly what they see. Students should speculate as to what conclusions aliens might draw from their observations of the Earthlings. Then the students could write a paragraph or paper on how the aliens' point of view would be different from their own.

This exercise was originally used to help students understand George Percy's point of view towards the New World in his "Discourse on the Plantation of the Southern Colony in Virginia.

M. Shawn Moore, Chesapeake

COMPOSITION prewriting

Ask students to collect grafitti from public places. As a whole group, brainstorm about any uniquely interesting example. What does its author look like? Where does s/he live? What incident prompted the writing of this bit of grafitti?

Following the whole group session, let students write imagined character descriptions of the authors of their favorite pieces of grafitti.

Helen Solomon, VCU student

Give a small object (an almond or a thumb tack) to each student. Ask them to invent a new use for it, and then share ideas. Ask them to magnify the object or minimize it. What new uses are possible. Let students use the results of the whole group session as the basis of a paragraph, a poem, or an advertisement.

Kristi Loomis, Fairfax County

COMPOSITION descriptive language

The teacher generates a list of synonyms for *went* in the sentence "He *went* down the path," and writes the words on pieces of paper which are put into a hat. The students pull one piece and write a paragraph describing a character and situation which ends in the sentence "He _____ down the path." The students then read their paragraphs, and the class must guess the synonym which is appropriate to fill in the last sentence.

The teacher brings in containers filled with various household substances as well as fruits or vegetables. I use five groups of five objects each (sugar, flour, pancake mix, drink mix powder, and saccharin). The class is divided into groups and asked to describe each object by the senses. Then each student chooses an object and writes a paragraph describing the object, appealing to all the senses. The rest of the class determines what was described.

Lois Stover, Virginia Beach

COMPOSITION creating descriptive paragraphs

This 8 step process seems to always work well:

1. Give students a simple sentence that will capture their imaginations; e.g. "Trog was a creature."
2. Ask them to rewrite the sentence by adding one descriptive word. Ask them to insert the word, rather than re-copy.
3. Share the revised sentences aloud.
4. Repeat step two again so that the original sentence becomes longer and more descriptive.
5. Again share the final sentences aloud.
6. Next, ask students to use their final sentences as the main idea or topic sentences for individual paragraphs.
7. Pair students for revision. Ask them to correct errors, and add a descriptive word to each sentence in the body of a paragraph.
8. Finally, ask students to re-copy their paragraphs in their revised forms and then share the end products aloud.

Debra Fleischer, Henrico County

Correlating Writing Assignments with the Study of Literature

SR. JOANNE SAFIAN, RSHM
Marymount School
Richmond

While some English curricula on the secondary level contain separate courses in literature, writing, and grammar, in others these areas are included in the one English course which the student takes throughout the year. The three areas are sometimes perceived to be separate subjects; studies have shown, however, that grammar and composition must be integrated if better writing skills are to result. Correlating composition with the study of literature is also desirable. This procedure fosters both the students' understanding and appreciation of literature and writing skills.

In order to write about literature, students must read closely and learn to analyze the material. They must think about what they read in order to arrive at the ideas about which they will write. If students respond actively and personally to literature, they are more likely to understand and appreciate it. Writing about literature also improves composition skills. After analyzing the material, students must learn to synthesize ideas; select and organize details that support the central idea; and express those ideas clearly in order to communicate with the reader.

In writing paragraphs and essays about some aspect of literature, students learn to analyze the literature and to develop critical writing skills. They learn also that critical analysis does not have to result in dull writing. For example, in describing the effect of the grindstone scene in Charles Dickens' A *Tale of Two Cities*, one student presented this paragraph:

> Perhaps no scene in *A Tale of Two Cities* conveys the barbarism of the revolution as effectively as the scene at the grindstone. The blatant hellishness of war is so obvious as to be repulsive. In their hysteria, the people lose their humanity and take on fiendish characteristics. Wearing false moustaches, they mask their faces and let loose their instincts. They lose self-control, relinquishing it to the grindstone and to their weapons. The weapons are tied to their hands, as if the people have no choice regarding their use. The brutality of the scene also seems to be contagious, for Dickens writes that a witness would give "twenty years of his life to petrify [the scene] with a well directed gun" (338). Through this scene, then, Dickens shows not only the terrible frenzy of war, but also how easy it is to become trapped in this frenzy, even to the point of wishing to destroy human lives in order to obliterate the scene.

Correlating literature and composition does not, however, limit one to critical writing. Various types of creative assignments are also possible. For example, students studying Patrick Henry's speech in the Virginia Convention can write a persuasive speech of their own. The topic on

which they write may have nothing to do with the American Revolution; it is likely that the assignment will not only assist students in understanding Henry's techniques, but also enable them to include some of these techniques in their own work. A similar approach to the study of other types of literature and writing assignments suggests a variety of possibilities: students studying a Shakespearean play might rewrite a scene using modern language; students studying the short story or tall tale might write a story or tale of their own; students studying satire might write a satiric piece on some aspect of contemporary American society. These assignments require students to understand the literature and to do different types of writing for different purposes and audiences.

If such assignments are to be successful, it is usually best to have students discuss the literature before they begin writing. Sometimes, however, reversing the procedure is fruitful. Students frequently have problems, for example, appreciating imagist poetry because, according to them, "it doesn't mean anything." This difficulty can be avoided if students write their own imagist poems before they are introduced to the literature. They do not have to know that they are writing this type of poetry. They can simply be asked to select some very specific subject and to convey in words what they would perceive from a photograph of their subject. Students who were given this assignment presented the following:

Orange Section

My mother packed my lunch today
and included in it—an orange.
While later peeling that orange,
the juice splattered on the concrete
and a drop
dripped
down
on my chin.
Unfortunately, on my way to
the trash can
to throw out my trash,
a sagging section
fell out of my soggy bag.
And Sally McRider stepped on it,
leaving the orange juice
as evidence
like blood stains
on the pavement
while the sun dried up the section.

Picnic Table

The grains run up and down with shadows cast
and sunshine's lights are shown.
The people have come and gone,
leaving only crumbs behind.

The ants have marched up and down
leaving nothing left to see
but grains that run up and down with shadows cast
where sunshine's lights are shown.

Students who were involved in the above assignment reacted very positively. They were excited about the poetry written by the class and, when imagist poetry was introduced, they were able to accept it more readily because they had already written some examples of their own. When students become excited about their work, the study of literature and the process of learning how to write become more fruitful experiences for them. They may find the literature to be more comprehensible and relevant than expected. They also discover that writing does not have to be a boring academic exercise. Writing becomes their opportunity to express insights and ideas; and writing effectively becomes an important value.

A Problem Solving Approach to Composition

MARILYN AMAIMO GUZINSKI
Prospect Heights Middle School
Orange

Recent attacks on teacher-centered writing classes have stirred again controversy between the interdependent classroom setting and the traditional setting. Some people argue that the traditional writing teacher tends to be overtaxed by the number of compositions which must be evaluated. Often such a teacher collects fewer themes and, as the sole audience for the writer, becomes less effective in helping students develop individual writing styles. Teacher evaluation of student writing frequently becomes a skill testing process in which errors are marked and papers returned.

The writing process may be more effective if adaptable problem solving techniques are used, including an editing process which places the student in a teaching role. Working in an urban and a rural school system, teaching both high school and middle school age students of a wide range of abilities, I have found that this approach helps many students meet with success in writing. The approach is adaptable to the untimed composition, the timed composition and the research paper. In the first two writing situations, students are often assigned a topic; in the latter, they formulate their own.

In the untimed writing situation, students work at their own pace, usually out of class. While learning this process, however, students should be permitted to work in class. The following problem solving techniques guide the student toward an organized and logical piece of prose.

STEP I—*Determine scope*—Students read the question to determine the limits of answering and to direct attention to the assigned topic.

STEP II—*Brainstorm information*—Students list information they know about the subject relevant to the scope of the topic. They may seek additional information, but must cite references. A lesson on footnotes and bibliographies may be incorporated.

STEP III—*Categorize information*—Using the brainstorming list, students formulate several classifications into which the information may be divided.

STEP IV—*Outline information*—Students classify information beneath categories. Any information which cannot be readily classified should be eliminated since it probably deviates from the focus of the theme. The categories should then be arranged to facilitate a logical presentation of information.

STEP V—*Rough draft*—Using the accumulated information, students should write the theme incorporating an organization imposed by the question. Students need only introduce each category in order and discuss the information classified beneath each. A very logical theme will unfold. If students wish to include an introductory paragraph, they may do so by mentioning the categories. The content paragraphs should progress in the sequence described in the introduction.

STEP VI—*Editing*—Students work with peers in groups of five to seven initially to offer praise and constructive criticism about their writing styles. In *Writing*

Without Teachers (Oxford University Press, New York: 1973), Peter Elbow proposes a model for establishing writing groups. Students begin to nurture trust among group members by first reacting only to the positive aspects of each other's writing. As time passes, group members begin to offer constructive criticism by stating their observations about the papers. In the exchange of papers, students are exposed to a variety of different writing approaches which may later inform their own writing. The class may wish to develop a set of guidelines which will help the peer groups focus on different aspects of style in each theme.

In the second step of the editing process, students work in pairs, reading and editing each other's papers for punctuation and grammatical errors according to an editor's code which they themselves have composed. The editor places a symbol for each error in the margin beside the line. The proofreader then signs the edited draft and returns the paper to the writer for corrections. Students may seek specific help from peers if the teacher designs a mastery chart containing a list of class names and the skills to be stressed. As a skill is mastered by a student, an X is placed in the skill column beside his name. Often students will insist on seeking guidance from a teacher, but by a quick glance at the mastery chart the teacher may redirect the student to a student tutor who can offer help in that skill.

Students are fascinated by using codes. If they are able to compose their own editor's code, they will take pride in using it. Before students begin working on compositions, allow them to compose a list of all the grammar and punctuation rules they can remember. Have them classify the rules using the same categorization process that will be used in the writing process. Permit students to develop a symbol to represent each rule. Compile the code into a booklet. As new rules are covered in class, add these to the rule code.

STEP VII—*Revised draft*—Once the rough draft has been edited, the student writes a revision of the theme. Writing from all of the steps may be submitted, tallied as completed, and the paper placed in the student's writing file. As the year progresses, the teacher, the student or a parent may evaluate the student's writing progress at any time.

The problem solving approach to writing an untimed composition may be adapted to a timed situation by rearranging some of the steps and eliminating others. The timed composition process is most helpful for writing themes in class or for homework, and is a valuable asset in teaching students to budget time on an essay test or an exam. The steps are as follows.

STEP I—*Determine scope*

STEP II—*Categorize*

STEP III—*Rough draft*

STEP IV—*Proofread for errors*—Students should proofread without using an editor's checksheet or the help of peers.

In a test situation where the teacher evaluates the student's grasp of grammatical skills and punctuation rules, the timed composition is valuable since the student worked independently. In correcting such a paper for learning purposes, however, the teacher should correct only one error at a time and focus the student's attention on a repeated error. Thus, the student is not overwhelmed by mistakes.

Finally, the problem solving approach to teaching writing may be applied to the research paper by rearranging the steps of the untimed composition. There are two distinctions between the untimed composition and the research paper. In the research paper, students draw on knowledge from outside sources rather than personal experience. Students usually know the scope of their untimed compositions before beginning to brainstorm, but in the research paper they need to clarify the scope of the paper, to limit the topic. The steps for the research paper are as follows.

STEP I—*Categorize and define scope*
STEP II—*Brainstorm and search out information from outside sources*
STEP III—*Organize*
STEP IV—*Outline*
STEP V—*Rough draft*
STEP VI—*Edit*
STEP VII—*Revised draft*

This approach to composition is successful for several reasons. First, it uses students as teachers and draws upon the knowledge which students have already acquired; students are able to approach the writing process with a feeling of accomplishment rather than failure. Second, the approach teaches students that written language should convey thought as clearly as oral language; sharing writing with peers teaches students to regard writing as an extension of conversation, a conversation dependent on using precise words in communicating with an audience. Third, students are a much more critical and skeptical audience than a teacher; they encourage and challenge each other. Fourth, the process automatically creates reading material; the papers created provide each student with instructional level grammar and composition materials containing *real* flaws, not flaws written by a grammarian to direct the student's attention to an isolated rule in a grammar book. Finally, students are involved in application of rules, synthesis of knowledge and evaluation of effective writing as a process when they serve as peer tutors.

CONGRATULATIONS TO VATE'S 1981 OFFICERS

President: Patricia Kelly, Virginia Tech
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Achievement Awards in Writing: National Council Teachers of English

CHARLES STALLARD
Old Dominion University

February 23, 1981 was the deadline for receipt of nomination blanks for the 1981 Achievement Awards in Writing competition sponsored by NCTE. This is the twenty-fourth consecutive year that NCTE has sponsored the program. During January, 1981, 18,400 nomination blanks were sent to public and private high school English department heads. Each high school selects its own nominees from the *junior* class and the number is determined by the enrollment of a given school in grades 10, 11, and 12. Nominees should be agreed upon by the English department and not by an individual teacher. A local competition to determine a school's nominee(s) is an effective way to involve more students in the program.

NCTE recommends the following standard and basis for judging the written entries be considered in selecting the nominees: *"The student should write clearly and effectively, revealing the ability to think for oneself and demonstrating competence in a wide range of writing skills."*

Each nominee must submit two entries, one being a sample the student considers his or her best work. While there is no limit on the length of this piece of writing, students should be discouraged from entering research or term papers. Samples that have written comments by teachers or grades on them should not be submitted. Students would be well advised to recopy such papers. Extremely long papers create difficulties in the evaluation process. In the case of short poems or prose vignettes, students may submit more than one sample.

The second entry is an impromptu theme written in one hour under a teacher's supervision. These should be written in long hand and submitted without revision. Each year NCTE designates a new topic for the impromptu theme. The topic for the 1980 competition illustrates the nature of this writing task:

> *There are moments when each of us experiences insights offering a new awareness in the direction of our lives, and perhaps some control of that direction. These moments are exciting, joyful, and sometimes a little terrifying. They may later appear minor, but they are important in our experience when they occur.*
>
> *Write a paper that describes one of your moments of insight. Your paper should communicate both the content and feel of your experience. Describe this total experience in enough detail for your reader to share your awareness, and be certain you clarify its significance in your life.*

The State Coordinator each year assembles teams of judges from across the state. Each team consists of one high school teacher and one college teacher of writing, and each entry is read by both judges. I eagerly solicit volunteers for the 1981 competition. Send me your name and address as soon as possible. Judges for 1980 were: Warren Self (Radford), Betty Swiggett (Hampton), Ruth Civzic (Covington), Patricia Kelly (VPISU), Helen Krell (McLean), Jerry Clark (Powell Valley), Janet Miller (ODU), William Coulter (Roanoke), Thomas Callahan (Chesapeake), Bonnie Wynn (New River), Joyce Swindell (Maury), Carolyn Rogers (Mountain Empire), Alan McLeod (VCU), Fillmer Hevener (Longwood), Jerry Botler (Altavista), William Goggin (VCU), Leon Williams (Roanoke/Salem), Roberta McFarland (Fairfax), Paul Slayton (MWC), Janet Basjo (Hampton).

Each judge rates papers assigned to the team and recommends whether the nominee should be considered as a finalist. The state coordinator tallies the results for each nominee, and, based on the total score and the number of recommendations, identifies the finalists. The number of finalists for a state is twice the number of congressional districts in that state. Virginia has ten congressional districts and is, therefore, entitled up to twenty finalists.

What do the judges look for when evaluating the entries? NCTE offers the following suggestions for judges:

In evaluating the two pieces of writing, the judges should consider the effectiveness of each piece in terms of its own purpose. They should answer for themselves such questions as, do the students show some depth of thought in the quality and presentation of ideas? Even if the thought is relatively commonplace, do the students show that they have made it their own? Are the writers clear about who they are in relation to their subject and audience? In their exposition do they show they can think logically? Do the students guide their readers through the main points of the paper with appropriate transitions and illustrations? Do they suggest ramifications of simple ideas or the simple structure of complex ideas? Do they show a range of command in vocabulary and sentence patterns? Does the diction reveal specificity, aptness, and freshness in the use of language?

Those are but sample questions a judge might ask. The comprehensive question is whether or not the writer exhibits power to inform and move an audience by means of control of a large range of the English language. If the student does not show an inquiring mind coping with real issues, the verdict should almost certainly be 'no.' But fuziness should not be mistaken for profundity, nor mechanical sloppiness for originality. Furthermore, although editorial and mechanical correctness is a virtue, meaningful variations should be allowed and the mere absence of mechanical error should not be overvalued. Excellent writers may blunder under the conditions of

impromptu writing even when they have a brief period of proofreading; in those cases some mechanical or spelling errors should be overlooked.

It is possible that you will select a finalist who is not equally good on both samples of writing. As a rule, flawed brilliance is to be prefered over correct dullness. The judges' role in selecting outstanding high school writers is paramount. They should recommend only those who are clearly outstanding, whose works could be printed in a magazine or local newspaper as representing the best high school writing in the state.

NCTE announces finalists in October of each year. Results of the program are sent to members of Congress, state officials, directors of admissions, and heads of English departments in colleges and universities. The finalists are recommended by NCTE for scholarships. Many college admission offices contact finalists and invite their applications for admission and scholarships. The competition is limited to juniors so that the booklet naming the finalists will reach colleges in time for students to be considered for admission and financial aid during their senior year of high school.

Being named a finalist in this competition is an honor. It is unfortunate that more of our high school students aren't given the opportunity to participate. Less than thirty percent of Virginia's public and private secondary schools participate in a given year. Encourage your school to participate if you are not already doing so. NCTE will happily supply information.

Congratulations to Virginia's 1980 Finalists, Their Families and Teachers

Bayard, Louis Pintard, West Springfield High School
7304 Whitson Drive, Springfield, Va.
Begley, Jerry Dawson, James Madison High School
1905 Prelude Drive, Vienna, Va.
Coleman, Kimberly, William Fleming High School
3302 Kershaw Road, Roanoke, Va.
Connolly, Carol Ann, West Springfield High School
7005 Hadlow Drive, Springfield, Va.
Cook, Todd Delmer, Quantico High School
MCDEC, Quarters 818 Geiger Road, Quantico, Va.
Covington, William Paul, Henrico High School
8115 Westmeath Lane, Richmond, Va.
Dickman, Cynthia, Kempsville High School
5316 Balfor Drive, Virginia Beach, Va.
Morduch, Jonathan Jacob, Groveton High School
1944 Martha's Road, Alexandria, Va.
Pho, Hong-Phong, McLean High School
6713 Lumsden Street, McLean, Va.
Pirsch, Lisa, Albemarle High School
107 Carrsbrook Court, Charlottesville, Va.
Reeve, Vicki Leilani, Lake Braddock Secondary School
5829 Kara Place, Burke, Va.
Rosenfeld, David Martin, Groveton High School
7308 Rippon Road, Alexandria, Va.
Stewart, Matthew William, Annandale High School
7477 Zanuck Court, Annandale, Va.
Teller, Gregory Cameron, Frank W. Cox High School
1324 Holly Point Road, Virginia Beach, Va.
Wright, Peggy, Lake Braddock High School
10713 Shadowglen Trail, Fairfax Station, Va.

Writing Satire: Interpretation, Perspective, and Parody

LEWIS P. LAWSON
The Collegiate Schools
Richmond

Jeffrey once cautioned, *"Satire is a composition of salt and mercury; and it depends upon the different mixture and preparation of those ingredients, that it comes out a noble medicine, or a rank poison."* If satire is too personal, it becomes sarcasm; if it is too strong, it changes to invective. Still, satire has been one of the top literary forms from Swift to Buchwald. Since it is such a popular form, students should have an opportunity to develop their skills at it.

To make students aware of perspective and interpretation, I usually scratch the hair on my chinny chin chin and decide upon "The Three Little Pigs," but if little girls and big bad wolves are more your style, "Little Red Riding Hood" works just as well. At any rate, I divide the class into five sections and then give the following instructions:

> We are going to write the story of "The Three Little Pigs." The original story may be added to or changed, but it must not be altered so much that the original tale cannot be recognized.
> - Row one will write the story from the perspective of the pig who built the straw house.
> - Row two will write from the point of view of the pig who built the stick house.
> - Row three will take the stance of the pig who built the brick house.
> - Row four will present the wolf's perspective.
> - Row five will present the action from the perspective of a newspaper reporter.

The students always have fun with this assignment; they also gather some rather important insights into the author's perspective toward the subject. The following is a section of a ninth grader's paper from the perspective of the wolf.

> "It's true I'm bigger than most of the other animals I know, but just because I'm real hairy and have big buck teeth, is that any reason for them to always run from me and never play with me?! Heck, wolves have feelings too. Shoot! Just the other day I went over to call on this little pig who had just built a beautiful straw house and moved into the neighborhood. Now, I don't belong to *Welcome Wagon* or any of those creepy organizations, but I did think it would be right neighborly of me to introduce myself.
>
> "When I got there, I rapped on the door and before I knew what was happening, she yelled, 'Get out of here, you big, bad wolf, I'll not let you in my hovel by all the hair stubble on my chubby, little leg, leg, leg.'
>
> "Now that really blew my mind—I had never seen this swine before in my life, and before I could even make myself known, she set out calling me all those bad things. I mean, all I ask for is a fair chance.

"But that's not really the bad part. How was I to know my hay fever was going to act up? After I sneezed, there was nothing but a big pile of straw. But honest, it was just an accident!"

The paper accomplished what the author intended, and the class reaction to it clearly indicated its entertainment value. After the students read their various renditions, they were eager to proceed to the next phase: tone and style. The students usually agree that tone reflects the author's attitude toward the material and style embodies treatment of the subject and comprises everything from sentence structure to diction. I remind students satire is a form of criticism that includes humor and wit and, in being aimed at people and institutions, is usually written with the intent to improve. For satire to be effective, it must reveal something. Subtlety should be encouraged as most audiences don't like the implication that they are dim-witted; sarcasm and invective should be avoided.

"Cinderella" is a story with unlimited potential for social satire. I ask students to rewrite "Cinderella" as a vehicle to comment on various elements of today's society. After completing this assignment the students are a little more aware of what is expected. I then ask the students to choose any story or fairy tale they wish to rewrite as a political satire. This excerpt from "The Little Red Hen and the Grain of Wheat," written by another ninth grader, suggests a firm concept of satire.

Many, many years ago on a very productive farm lived a Little Red Hen and her brood of fluffy little chicks. Now the time came when most of the lush summer crops had been harvested and ravishly eaten by all the gluttonous little chicks who had copiously feasted all summer from the fields.

But the Little Red Hen sighed, "Dear, oh dear, I must not forget that when winter comes the green meadows and fields will be covered with snow. Then we will be like all those other undernourished farms that have no food. I must see that our little cupboard is filled with good things to eat and that we waste nothing so that we will have plenty when the cold weather sets in." . . .

Due to the insatiable gluttony of all the other animals, hardly a seed was to be found. But the Little Red Hen continued to hunt here and there, while all the others could only stare, till at last, with a happy cry, she found some in the pig sty.

"Now who will help me sow the wheat?" asked the Little Red Hen, looking around at the indolent barnyard folks as she hurried over to the garden with her apron full of grain.

"Not I," quacked the spendthrift duck called Congress.

"Not I," squeaked the apathetic mouse called John Q.

"Not I," grunted the indulgent pig named Stockholder, "we're all too involved."

"Dear me, what improvident people," thought the Weathercock on the Big Red Barn as he swung to and fro on his gilded toe, now south, now west as only the wind knew best. . .

And so, as the paper goes, all the animals were too "involved" to make long range provisions. They were all too preoccupied with their own material, sensual life. And in the process of demonstrating this, the

paper touches on many of those groups whose values have changed from the values that made this country prosperous. The discerning eye will recognize much of the above as parody. To obtain more effective satire with future assignments, I have found that a discussion of parody is helpful so that students can more adequately control discourse and make perceptive observations concerning people and institutions. That the above is satire, criticism with wit and humor directed toward humanity, is apparent. For a ninth grade student I consider it to be a creditable piece of writing. The fact that this student knew so much about many prevalent attitudes was surprising and encouraging. In fact, how much the class as a whole was able to comment upon contemporary events made this a most refreshing and stimulating assignment.

The Virginia Writing Project

In 1978 a coalition of Virginia universities began investigating with school divisions the possibility of developing a program based on the Bay Area Writing Project, now the National Writing Project. A program had begun in northern Virginia the year before. Eventually the Virginia Writing Project took shape. The Title IV-C office in the Department of Education agreed to help fund such a project. Francis T. Phillips, head of that office, worked with the coalition in obtaining the services of Lunenburg County as the local educational agency and Tom Palmore as the LEA representative. Mary Pat Hall and Kenneth Bradford in the Department of Education helped coordinate the coalition, and Gish & Associates were contracted as external evaluators.

A listing of Institute Fellows/Teacher Consultants from the first years of the project follows. Several of these individuals have been published in the *Bulletin*. Should schools or individuals be interested in learning more about the project or in contacting Teacher Consultants about inservice programs, they should consult with the project directors in the English departments and schools of education at these universities.

Directors of Virginia Writing Project Sites

College of William and Mary: Mark Gulesian, Lynn Bloom, Mary Barnes
George Mason University: Betty Blaisdell, Don Gallehr, Chris Thaiss
Old Dominion University: Denny Wolfe and Kenneth Karloff
University of Virginia: Joe Strzepek and Steve Railton
Virginia Commonwealth University: Jim Kinney, Bill Goggin, Alan McLeod, Bill Griffin
Virginia Tech University: Patricia Kelly, George Hayhoe, Scott Buechler, Robert Small, Warren Self
Virginia State University: Bertie Powell and Doug Decker

VWP Institute Fellows

CAPITAL WRITING PROJECT (VCU)

Angell, Ralph M. (Jr.)
Meadowbrook High School

Boone, Beth V.
Huguenot High School

Brooks, Larry R.
Charles City County Schools

Brown, Patricia L.
Matoaka High School

Cameron, Gladys
George Mason Elementary

Creecy, Robert A.
Tangier Combined School

DeMerritt, Eleanor
Brookland Middle School

Driskill, Cindy K.
Clover Hill High School

Evans, Joyce C.
Elizabeth B. Redd Elementary

Fleisher, Debra Sims
Carver Junior High

Griffin, Ellen
Tuckahoe Middle School

Gunter, Margaret
Freeman High School

Hall, Sylvia B.
Chickahominy Academy High

Heslep, Susan
East End Middle School

Hill, Ada S.
Manchester High School

Hodge, Martha
King William Elem. Schools

Hood, Sallie C.
Tucker High School

Hunt, Meredith
Salem Church Junior

Killian, Julia C.
Hermitage High School

Kirby, Mary
New Kent Middle

Lawson, Lewis P.
Collegiate Schools

Lewis, Virginia M.
Kennedy-Armstrong High

Loney, Mamie
Charles City Elem. CS

Mantlo, Valerie
Varina High School

McLaughlin, Bonnie
Formerly of Fairfax CHS

Moser, Mary Sue
Blessed Sacrament Elem. S.

Murray, Betsy B.
Carver Junior High

Phillips, Thelma D.
Trinity Episcopal High

Reed, Marjorie
Grange Hall Elem. School

Rice, Dorothy M.
Patrick Henry Elem.

Sadler, Kathy
Marymount High School

Schrock, Trudy J.
E.S.H. Greene Elem.

Smith, Sister Dolores
Univ. of Asmara

Steilberg, Isabel
Private tutor

Strapec, Jana A.
Our Lady of Lourdes Elem. School

Tunstall, Jean E.
Varina High School

Williams, Hilda
St. Gertrude High

Willis, Marjory
Midlothian High

Yost, June
Goochland CHS

Young, Lynne E.
Washington, NC

CENTRAL VIRGINIA WRITING PROJECT (UVa)

Almarode, Elaine F.
Stuarts Draft High School

Alvine, Lynne B.
Parry McCluer High School

Amiss, Mary K.
Walker Middle School

Armstrong, Mark
Virginia Episcopal School

Bentley, Judy E.
Boyce Elem. School

Berry, Margaret Smith
Burley Middle School

Burdette, Jo Ann
Warren County Jr. High

Burrow, Catherine G.
Buford Middle School

Clark, Marlene W.
Forest Elem. School

Coates, John Carr (III)
Heritage High School

Engel, Cheryl A.
E. C. Glass High School

Estes, Z. James (Jr.)
Albemarle High School

Fischer, Thomas R.
Campbell County Schools

Foor, Regina M.
Gloucester High School

Francis, Jane Canter
Orange County HS

Guzinski, Marilyn A.
Prospect Hgts. School

Hooks, Edsel Wayne (Jr.)
Amelia County High School

Izzo, Joan M.
Prospect Hgts. School

Lane, David J.
Ft. Defiance High School

Lewis-Volk, Katherine Anne
Buffalo Gap High School

Lough, Posy Baker
Buford Middle School

MacDonald, Timothy C.
Albemarle High School

Miles, Jeanne Waldman
Charlottesville High Sch.

Miller, Charles S.
Nelson County High School

Mills, Linda M.
Western Albemarle High Sch.

Moore, Harriet W.
Orange Elementary School

Myers, Barbara Swink
Dunbar Middle School

Ogburn, Carol J.
Albemarle High School

Owens, Ann Elaine
Amherst County High Sch.

Parrish, Nancy
E. C. Glass High School

Pritchett, Gerald Lee
Spotsylvania High Sch.

Rogers, Teresa B.
Fluvanna County High Sch.

Saunders, Jamet W.
Bonner Junior High School

Scallett, Eliza B.
Western Albemarle High Sch.

Skinner, William B.
Rustburg High School

Smith, Ronald Lee
Harrisonburg High School

Spencer, Annese S.
Robert S. Payne Elem. Sch.

Sprouse, James H. (III)
Western Albemarle High Sch.

Stamps, Lawrence G.
Heritage High School

Sublette, Katheryn K.
Western Albemarle High Sch.

Taylor, Annette D.
Schuyler Elem. School

Titus, Therese K.
Charlottesville High Sch.

Warren, Anna B.
Arvonia Primary School

Watson, Rheta Carr
Sandusky Middle School

EASTERN VIRGINIA WRITING PROJECT (W&M)

Azimi, Mary
Captain John Smith Elem. School

Blosjo, Janet
Hampton High School

Carew, Claudine
Bruton High School

Carr, Elbert
Phoebus High School

Cartwright, Laura
Lafayette High School

Epperson, Mary Jane
Green Run High School

Franke, Clarke
Lafayette High School

Goldman, Ethel
Princess Anne Jr. High School

Gore, Kay
Va. Beach City Schools

Grimm, Joel
Kecoughtan High School

Hull, Barbara
Princess Anne Jr. High School

Jessee, Hazel
Independence Jr. High School

Kahn, Robin
Laurel, Maryland

King, Barbara
Churchland High School

Mannario, John
Bayside High School

Marchbank, Lilian Bailey
Independence Jr. High School

McCary, Diane
Barron Elementary School

McConachie, Stephanie
James Blair Intermediate School

Mitchell, Vincent
Manor High School

Monroe, Rosemary
Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Moran, Suzanne
Dare Elementary School

Odum, Helen
Woodstock Elementary School

Osborne, Carol
Kempsville High School

Peters, Deanne
Kempsville High School

Ramsden, James
Green Run High School

Rutherford, Vicky
Yorktown Intermediate School

Sears, Margaret
Paul Burbank Elementary School

Selby, Mary
Walsingham Academy

Smith, Donna
Warwick High School

Waid, Helen
Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Wheeler, Harold
Princess Anne High School

White, Elaine
Princess Anne High School

Whitenack, Ronald
Menchville High School

Williams, Linda
Dozier Intermediate School

NORTHERN VIRGINIA WRITING PROJECT (GMU)

Aldridge, Anne M.
Hayfield Secondary School

Andrus, Ellen
Alexandria

Armstrong, Shaw
W. G. Coleman Elem.

Bizzaro, Patrick
Northern Va. Comm. Col.

Boltz, Carol
Northern Va. Comm. Coll.

Colecotronis, Judith
Lake Braddock Secondary

Brinkerhoff, Gay F.
Woodson High School

Cascio, Chuck
South Lakes High School

Clark, Susan A.
Herndon Intermediate

Costello, Betty C.
George C. Marshall H.S.

Davis, Milton
George Mason Jr./Sr. High

Falcone, Barbara
Poe Intermediate School

Garea, Catherine
Burke

Gibson, Margaret (Meg)
Francis C. Hammond

Giordano (Emmett) Wendy
Green Acres Elementary

Goins, Jane Y.
Falls Church

Glaze, Bernadette
Lake Braddock Secondary

Granger, Alice
James Madison High School

Greer, Reba E.
Osbourn Park Senior High

Grossman, Alberta
Oakton High School

Hoagland, Nancy
Northern Va. Comm. Coll.

Hodges, Katherine K.
Garfield Elementary

Hoebel, Arlene
Woodson High School

Hollingshead, Mary
Chantilly Secondary School

Hoover, Michael J.
George Mason Jr./Sr. High

Hruby, Dorothea
Lake Braddock

Humbertson, Donald C.
Vienna

Jarratt, Esther
Sleepy Hollow Elementary

Jones, Arthur
Churchill Road Elementary

Jones, Jane H.
Clifton Elementary School

Jorns, Midge M.
Wallingford, PA

Kent, Leslie A.
Herndon Intermediate-Admin.

Kryston, Victor H.
Chantilly Secondary

Lawson, Joan D.
Groveton High School

Loomis, Kristie
Hutchison Elementary

Lovins, Vicki
Stonewall Jackson High Sch.

Lowenstein, Ronnie B.
Freedom Hill Elementary

Lucia, Judy
H/B Woodlawn Secondary

McFarland, Roberta T.
Alexandria

Meyer, Barbara B.
Alexandria

Miller, Bonnie L.
Sleepy Hollow Elementary

Mohr, Marian M.
Alexandria

Muldoon, Rosemary
Thoreau Intermediate School

Nedelman, Joan
South Lakes High School

Nocerino, Mary Ann
Terraset Elementary

Nyrop, Nancy D.
Herndon High School

Palay, Carol P.
Lake Braddock Secondary

Parnell, Patricia J.
J. E. B. Stuart High School

Peabody, Anne H.
J.E.B. Stuart High School

Potts, Meta
James Wood High School

Ridley, Barbara Ann
Poe Intermediate

Rogers, Courtney
Thomas Jefferson High School

Rothman, Gloria
Falls Church

Schulman, Mary
Mt. Eagle Elementary

Stansbery, Martene
Oakton High School

Stoneham, Joyce K.
Luther Jackson Intermediate

Stoodley, Janice
Patuxent River, MD

Swan, Linda
Parkview High School

Swernofsky, Mildred
Canterbury Woods Elementary

Varnado, Beverly B.
Stonewall Jackson High School

Weiner, Wendy V.
Annandale High School

Werner, Stuart
Northern Va. Comm. Coll.

West, Jean
J. E. B. Stuart High School

Westfall, Helen
West Springfield High School

Wotring, Anne M.
Lake Braddock Secondary

Willcock, Elvin Jim
London Towne Elementary

Williams, Patricia
Virginia Hills Elementary

Woodard, Polly W.
West Springfield High School

SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA WRITING PROJECT (VSU)

Bolling, Thomasine
Dinwiddie Junior High School

Bonner, Shirley
Sunnyside-McKenny Elem. Sch.

Brown, Victoria
Peabody Jr. High School

Butter, Dorothy
Harrowgate Elem. Sch.

Clark, Sherri
Sunnyside-McKenny Elem. Sch.

Davis, Mary
Charles City High School

Delbridge, Peggy
Grange Hall Elem. Sch.

Diradour, Virginia
L. L. Beazley School

Everette, Barbara
N. B. Clements Jr. HS

Flippen, William
Danville

Glass, Harriet
Va. Avenue Elem. School

Hairston, Ruth
Peabody Jr. High Sch.

Hicks, Arthurette
Va. Avenue Elem. School

Hill, June
Prince George High School

Johnson, Charlotte
Ettrick Elementary School

Jones, Bettye
Matoaca Laboratory School

Lindsey, Gayle
Petersburg Alternative School

Longsworth, George
Peabody Jr. High School

Miller, Belinda
Hopewell High School

Moore, Barbara
Jones Elem. School

Palmer, Myrtle
Southside Elementary School

Pegram, Elizabeth
Dinwiddie Jr. High School

Perry, Julie
Walton Elementary School

Piercy, Claudette
Petersburg Middle School

Poarch, Ethel
Sussex Central High School

Potts, Elaine
Gibbons High School

Redd, Franklin
Peabody Jr. High School

Rodall, Freddie
Annie B. Jackson Elementary School

Slaughter, Laura
Sunnyside-McKenney Elementary School

Smallwood, June
Peabody Jr. High School

Whittle, Agnes
Central High School

Wynn, Brenda
Petersburg High School

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA WRITING PROJECT (VPISU)

Amos, Anne D.
Blacksburg High School

Bishop, Dorothy S.
Radford University

Breeden, Joyce H.
Virginia Tech

Burton, Cheri L.
Glenvar Junior High School

Brockmeyer, Sheila S.
Pulaski County High School

Cook, Elaine C.
Pulaski County High School

Elliott, Helen Y.
Virginia Western Comm. Col.

England, Ronald E.
William Fleming High School

Fuller, Judith L.
Shawsville High School

Hanner, Jack B.
Dabney-Lancaster Comm. Col.

Harris, Catherine L.
Virginia Tech

Henson, Linda D.
William Byrd High School

Hinson, Carolyn M.
Dublin Middle School

Hughes, Richard M.
Pulaski County High School

Kirby, Mary Susan
Radford University

Lloyd, Linda S.
Critzer Elementary

McKnight, Tom K.
Southwest Va. Com. Col.

Merkel, Barbara G.
Virginia Tech

Moses, Debra A.
Green Valley Elementary

Newnam, Edwin K.
Fieldale-Collinsville High School

Nixon, Julia H.
Ruffner Junior High School

Pacifici, Gordon A.
Virginia Tech

Psathas, Janet S.
King Johnson Elementary

Rosenbaum, Nancy R.
William Fleming High School

Self, Judith S.
Christiansburg Middle School

Sellers, Charlotte B.
Blacksburg High School

Sellers, James L.
Blacksburg High School

Simmons, Nancy C.
William Fleming High School

Smith, Eleanor K.
Tazewell High School

Spencer, Phyllis A.
Marion Senior High School

Swope, John W.
Virginia Tech

Tripp, Shari H.
Narrows Elementary

Van Dyke, Ray E.
Blacksburg High School

Wells, Ernest
Southwest Va. Community College

Wigington, Robert E.
Bassett Junior High School

TIDEWATER WRITING PROJECT (ODU)

Asher, Jim
Cox High School

Braford, Mary
Kennedy High School

Bryant, Janet
Nansemond-Suffolk HS

Callahan, Tom
Deep Creek HS

Corey, Jean
Roberts Park Elem.

Dixon, Suzanne
Western Branch HS

Dorsey, Jeanne
Bayside High School

DuLaney, Kathy
Indian River Jr. High

Frey, Steve
Windsor High School

Harris, Betty
Park View Elementary

Haynes, Louise
Courtland Elem. School

Hobbs, Trip
Nansemond-Suffolk

Hunter, Valerie
Booker T. Washington

Johnson, Margurete
Truitt Jr. High

May, Edie
Chittum Elementray

Paul, Pat
Fairlawn Elementary

Peterson, Bev
Windsor High School

Robbins, Dot
First Colonial High School

Segal, Millie
Granby High School

Tarr, Deb
Granby High School

Wilson, Rose
Norview Elementary School

The Excitement of Authorship: Child as Bookmaker

F. Rita Kaslow
James Madison University

The excitement of authorship is as important to a child as it is to any adult. The cries of "My book is finished! My book is finished!" reflect the puff of pride. The thumbed and worn pages of books they have written is evidence of the special interest children take in their own products and in the books produced by others as well. Books for children and written by children constitute

> ...a fresh approach to poetry and prose, such books impress upon children the value of communication from other children...(Kean and Personke, *The Language Arts Teaching and Learning in the Elementary School*, St. Martin's Press, New York: 1976, p. 332.)

For kindergarten and primary children who are in the early stages of writing, the dictated storybook recorded by teacher, parent-aide, or older child gives impetus for acquiring skills and making the connection between oral language and written language. If personnel are scarce, a tape recorder would be useful. The child can tell the story to the recording machine and the story can then be typed or written at another time.

The world at large is a great source of interest and ideas for children. Special subjects include: holidays, health, humor, other children, self, pets, family, fanciful tales, realistic stories, environment/pollution, sports, favorite foods, things that are round or square, monsters, and science fiction. Teachers can compile other lists of favorite subjects based upon a simple interest inventory.

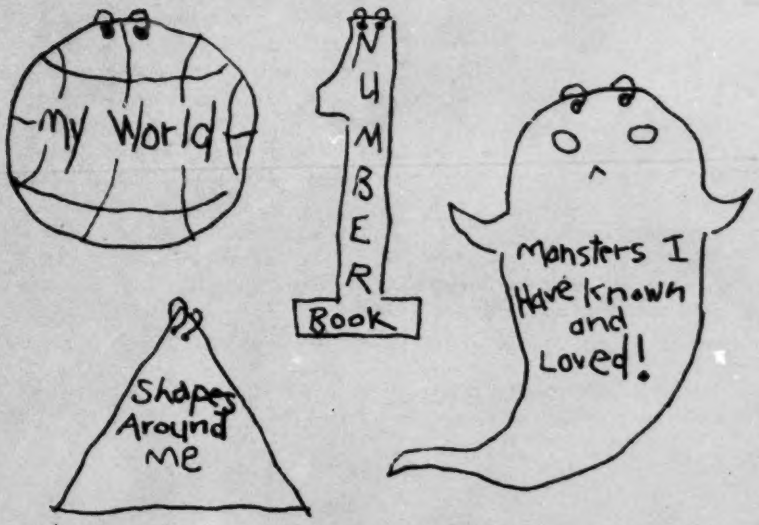
As the child advances, the book becomes a pleasurable and creative experience. But sensitivity to language clarity and precision, once the child is beyond third grade, emerges as a concern when their writing is being read by others. Skill that will enable them to revise and polish their writing is sought after by these youthful writers.

Eventually children will develop the habit of proofreading and editing, but the smoothness with which this occurs depends upon the sensitive reception to those activities by their teachers. Premature criticism, too early adherence to a rigorous spelling and punctuation program, and no opportunity for self-correction will very quickly stifle the efforts of young authors (Spodek, *Teaching in the Early Years*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs: 1972). The teacher will need to resist enforcing adult standards on child authors.

Changes in goals, style, creative ability will occur as the child matures and enjoys experience with language. The classroom from kindergarten through grade six should be a beehive for writing and publishing. The teacher should provide stimuli, materials, experiences and opportunities for exchanging ideas. The results are books that take on many forms and shapes, with varied content as the maturity and writing ability of each child evolves.

Bookmaking can begin with pages of newsprint; clothbound versions can come later. The books may be written and illustrated by an individual child or in colloboration with another child using drawings, ink sketches, pictures from magazines or newspapers, or photographs. For a three dimensional effect, corrugated cardboard may be used. There are a number of decorative tech-

niques for designing text pages and book covers: potato printing, block printing, spatter painting, crayon melting, crayon resisting, marblizing paint, sand and/or oatmeal and color.



There are also several ways for including text on a page such as:

- Printing or writing directly on paper.
- Typing directly on the page, using a primary typewriter where appropriate.
- Typing or writing on another page and gluing it to a blank page.
- Writing with glue and adding a material for texture.

The stimulus of reading the writing of other children as well as their own writing becomes a perpetual motivator for involvement with writing. Maturity in style and skill of writing will soon lead to curiosity about each level of book production.

Teachers will find a consciousness about spelling, vocabulary, study skills, punctuation, and capitalization evolving as the child matures. The teacher will also observe increasing involvement with cover and title page, table of contents, preface and dedication, planning and writing content, illustrations with or without captions, an index, and bibliography. (Rubin, *Teaching Elementary Language Arts*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York: 1975). Both child and teacher may look forward to many exciting adventures in bookmaking and writing. The glow of a child who has just authored a book makes all the effort worthwhile.

Teaching Paragraph Development

JEAN W. COBB
E. C. Glass High School
Lynchburg

One semester a National Merit Semi-Finalist was failing my Advanced Placement course because he could not adequately develop his ideas. His longest papers were no more than 200 words; though he was perceptive and read with insight, his essays were no more than a listing of major points. He offered no *support* for the ideas he had. He and his parents were dismayed, my principal chagrined, and I desperate for a way to show him how to *support* his ideas. So, we began to work together after school almost every day. At first nothing seemed to help; but one day as I was explaining in a new way how to tackle the old problem, I saw his eyes clear up. He understood. Now I hadn't said anything he hadn't heard me say before, nor had I made any startling theoretical discovery about the way to teach paragraph development. I had, however, stumbled onto an effective way of explaining that skill that continues to work well for me.

When I start teaching paragraph development, I go to the board and talk and sketch my way through the following:

STATEMENT
SUPPORT
COMMENT

I then ask students:
What does the introduction of a research paper do? (Someone realizes always that it makes a *statement*.) What does the body of the paper do? (Someone suggests that it offers *support* for the *statement* made in the introduction.) What does the conclusion do? (By this time it is obvious that *COMMENT* is the only one of the three left; they all yawn and someone tells me what I want to hear.)

Then I draw a diagram of the five-paragraph essay and ask the same questions. Some cooperative student suppresses his yawns long enough to say that the introduction makes a *statement*, the body offers *support*, and the conclusion makes a *comment*.

Next, I enlarge one paragraph of the five-paragraph diagram and repeat my questions, getting students to tell me that the topic sentence makes a *statement* about the *statement* made in the introduction, and that the body of the paragraph offers *support* for the *statement* made in the topic sentence. I draw arrows to the thesis to reinforce the concept that the topic sentence makes a *statement* in *support* of that. By this time, the yawns have diminished, for the students see that I do have a point to make.

With most classes I then use the overhead projector to discuss a transparency of an effective five-paragraph paper, analyzing the *statement, support,* and *comment* structure. I ask students to bring to the next class the thesis (*statement*), topic sentences (*support*), and conclusion (*comment*) copied out of one of their papers.

The next day, I ask two students to write their sentences on the board. We discuss these sentences, then I quickly re-sketch the diagrams from the previous day and we fill them in again quickly. Finally I draw an oversized diagram of a paragraph and show them that paragraph development comes from seeing *inside each paragraph statement, support, comment constructs.*

Statement 1	Topic sentence
	A. Statement
	1.
	2. Support sentence
	Comment
Support	B. Statement
Sentences	1.
	2. Support sentence
	Comment
	C. Statement
	1.
	2. Support sentence
Comment	Concluding sentence

At this point I find it best to use two overheads, one to show a skimpy paragraph from one of their papers and the other to illustrate that same paragraph fully developed. These two paragraphs are typical:

1. *Topic Sentence* A surprising number of people have a negative attitude toward life. Each has different reasons for feeling this way. Some may feel that they are worthless and have no reason to live or that life itself is worthless. Life may be so painful that they consider suicide. Why is this? These people may not have had rewards or joys in their lives, such as marriage, children, or prosperous careers. They may have overlooked opportunities, passed by openings, or not taken chances which could have improved their lives. They may have had to suffer during some hard times, but doesn't everyone? Many people with this negative attitude could improve their lives so that enjoyment and pleasure occur often, but some are past the point of caring whether they live or die.

Concluding Sentence

2. *Topic Sentence Statement* A surprising number of people see life as a grim series of hardships, disappointments, and regrets. The exact reasons for these bitter feelings vary, but the sufferers share the feeling that life has no worth. This overwhelming sense that life is futile leads some hopeless people to suicide. Every paper carries the story of some apparently happy and successful businessman who put a .38 in his ear and

Statement Support

	blasted his way into oblivion, or the account of a young woman who gulps an entire bottle of little yellow Nembutals
Comment and Statement Support	so that she won't have to wake another morning to another empty day. What has happened to these people to bring them to such despair? The businessman may, perhaps, have just discovered he has been by-passed for the promotion he counted on so much. Or he may have just learned of his wife's infidelity, his son's failure in college, his teen-age daughter's pregnacy. The young woman may have just discovered that her married boss, whom she has been secretly seeing for some time, really never intended to divorce his
Comment and Statement Support	wife and marry her. Or she may have glimpsed in the bathroom mirror for the first time the tell-tale sagging that signals the end of youth. Whatever may have been the precise incident that destroyed the hope and confidence of these people was almost certainly not so serious as to warrant dying for. Countless other men and women have faced such problems without succumbing to despair. It must be that these people had no abiding belief in the sanctity and
Comment (concluding Sentence)	value of their lives. One wonders if it was not their own habits of bitterness and gloom rather than any adversity that made them in the end deny their lives all value.

- *Homework* based on the same approach. I make transparencies from their homework and we discuss why some supporting details are more successful than others.
- *Group work* in which the task is to add the 3rd set of *statement, support, comment* sentences.

I then explain how the outline of the fully-developed paragraph would look, adding beside the diagram a roman numeral at the topic sentence; A, B, C, beside each *support statement;* and 1, 2, 3 beside each *support-*detail. I explain that the last *comment* often vanishes into the concluding sentence. For homework this day I provide one well-developed paragraph and ask them to set up an outline showing how each sentence functions.

I provide ample opportunity to practice this approach to paragraph development. I give them as many of the following exercises as seem useful:

- *Group work* in which the task is to add supporting details to a paragraph otherwise complete. For this activity I provide acetate sheets on which the unsupported paragraph is typed. Developing samples from the skimpy paragraphs written by your own students should work well.
- *Home work* based on the same approach. An overlay transparency works well, for students take interest when they see their work projected anonymously.

Because not all students in a class catch on to new ideas with the same ease, I return to paragraph development throughout the semester. Having provided this systematic approach, however, I do have something concrete to return to. And until all students in a class learn to develop paragraphs adequately, I have a fresh supply of paragraphs for study each time a set of papers comes in.

I don't suggest that this approach will make instantly successful

writers of all students, but I have found it makes tangible and teachable some difficult ideas. It is too mechanical an approach to produce brilliant paragraphs, but the brilliant paragraph writers aren't the problem; they already understand that they cannot make throughout a paper one generality after another. The problem writers *need and can profit from* a concrete, even mechanical approach. Certainly I hope that as they gain skills they can go beyond the need for a mechanism and write more freely, but until they can, I want to give them concrete approaches. They need to see the adequate development of ideas not as the mysterious ability of the professional writer, but as a skill they too can learn.

Student Writing Is Alive: But How Do I Grade It?

HAZEL JESSEE
Old Dominion Center
Virginia Beach

Grading student writing has always been a burden for teachers of English, but the real burden lies not only in the numbers of papers a teacher must grade but also in how to grade writing. What is the true difference between the C+ and B− composition? How can I make students believe that I meant all of the positive marginal comments I wrote about improvement when they still receive a *C*? These worries nagged at me each time I graded student writing. The glib answers of *A* being excellent work; *B*, good; *C*, average; *D*, deficient; and *F*, unacceptable work were easy to recite to students, but not very helpful. The nodding heads and dulled countenances told me that they perceived my inability to explain honestly my assessment of their work.

My concerns about evaluation led me to concentrate on that topic when I participated in the 1980 Eastern Virginia Writing Project at William and Mary. Research studies, theories, and my fellow teachers' suggestions about evaluation convinced me to reassess my criteria for evaluating student writing.

Studies by different researchers such as Paul Diederich, John French, and Sydell Carlton indicated that evaluators stress in varying degrees only one of five parts of a piece of writing—content, organization, diction, style, and mechanics, with high school English teachers reading for mechanical errors and for very little else. Evaluating a message's effectiveness on an isolated part is not only unfair to the student writer but also leaves to chance the development of a reasonable sequence of instruction about the writing processes.

Other research studies pointed out the unreliability of evaluators, noting that the subtle and overt biases which teachers have affect the assessment of student writing. Studies have indicated a single word, such as *boy, girl, honors,* or *average* will affect the grade an evaluator gives a piece of writing. Benjamin Rosner proved the effects of bias in an experiment for Educational Testing Service in which he distributed copies of the same papers to different raters. One month Rosner would stamp one copy of the paper *boy* and the other copy *girl*. The copy stamped *girl* averaged a letter grade higher than the paper stamped *boy*. If just a word can affect evaluation, consider how much effect the students' full personalities will have when teachers grade papers.

Other factors also compound the problems of fairly evaluating student writing. Evaluation needs to be formative, aimed at altering behavior, improving writing for the next effort. However, the positive marginal or end remarks of assessment of the students' progress are often con-

tradicted by the grade, the summative evaluation which assesses the overall worth of the students' writing.

Examining these concerns convinced me that circling students' errors in spelling, usage, and mechanics just was not enough, even if, in my enlightment, I used pink rather than red ink. I had been doing too much of the students' editing and revising for them. The real task for the evaluator is to learn to judge student writing as a whole message, rather than concentrating primarily on its parts. This focusing on the whole is an extremely difficult task. To give no grade at all on writing might be a solution, but the realities of the educational system eventually demand assignment of a value to the product.

In devising ways to measure growth in student writing, holistic evaluation can offer a solution to some of the problems of reliability of assessment. Holistic evaluation is based upon the belief that a piece of writing communicates a whole message with a particular tone to a known audience for some purpose. The whole is greater than the total of its parts. Holistic evaluation is a guided procedure for taking a piece of writing, scoring it for the prominence of certain established features important to the particular kind of writing being done, and assigning it a number or letter grade. The scoring is done quickly, impressionistically, after the scorer has practiced the procedure. The scorer does not make corrections or revisions on the paper.

Charles Cooper, in *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging,* maintains that where there is a commitment and time to do the work required to achieve reliability of judgment, holistic evaluation of writing remains the most valid means of summative evaluation of writing. There are several types of holistic evaluation, each type has certain advantages, but primary trait scoring is perhaps the most effective because two processes of writing, making a clear, complete assignment and setting expectations for evaluation, are completed simultaneously. As Lee Odell noted in his remarks to the May 1980 writing conference at Old Dominion University, there are no longer hidden agendas in grading, no rules or requirements that only the teacher knows. Everything is up front and stated before the student does the writing task. The emphasis is rightfully shifted from the graded product to the process of writing.

Primary trait scoring guides focus the evaluator's attention on just those features of a piece which are relevant to the kind of disclosure it is: to the special blend of audience, speaker role, purpose, and subject required by that discourse and that writing task. A unique quality of primary trait scoring is that the scoring guides are constructed for a particular writing task set in full rhetorical context.

Primary trait scoring can ensure better teaching and better learning. The time invested in writing thorough assignments and in identifying the traits or characteristics of that writing pays off in clearer, more purposeful student writing. Rather than inhibiting the freedom of student writers, primary trait scoring helps the writer focus his thinking within

the defined but not rigid assignment. Note the differences between the first assignment below and the second which was created by Richard Lloyd-Jones, a leading advocate of primary trait scoring.

> *Assignment #1*—Imagine you are a kid in a boat. Describe what you see, using vivid sensory detail.
>
> *Assignment #2*—Picture in your mind a boat full of kids. These kids are having fun jumping on the overturned boat. Imagine you are one of the children in the picture. Or, if you wish, imagine that you are someone standing nearby watching the children. Tell what is going on as he or she would tell it. Write as if you were telling this to a good friend, in a way that expresses strong feelings. Help your friend feel the experience, too.

The second assignment is more specific and student-oriented with defined areas for honest evaluation. The student, not just the teacher, knows what the assignment is and what he's to be graded on.

By using one or a combination of holistic evaluative techniques, the teacher of writing is free to reinforce the good in a student's work and to suggest ways to improve, one thing at a time, student writing. The teacher can establish a climate of trust and teach students to evaluate their own work and that of their peers: teach the process of writing rather than just edit, revise, and grade student compositions.

The process of evaluation is an excellent teaching and learning tool; it may also, however, be a source of fear, anxiety, and hard feelings among teachers, students, and parents. In my teaching this year, I chose to concentrate on formative evaluation, aiming to change students' work behavior, patterns, attitudes, and production. I resisted putting grades on a work until we reached the point where everyone—students and teacher—had tired of the work. Not until the writing had been revised, responded to by more than one person, and revised again did I evaluate summatively.

The process of evaluation became a class affair. I tried to reduce the role of teacher as sole grade-giver on each piece of writing. Students helped establish primary traits for the assignments and produced the evaluative checklists for each assignment. Before completing the writing, we spent time talking about and agreeing upon what criteria were crucial to the effectiveness of the message. Initially, I feared the students would be biased, unsophisticated, and limited as evaluators, but, with practice, their evaluations became more astute and valuable.

Evaluation must involve the student as much as it does the teacher. Assigning a composition for the student to write alone at home for the teacher ultimately to grade at home in isolation is not the most effective way to teach writing. Evaluation is an important process to be shared by teacher and students in the classroom. With a decreased emphasis on grades, students can find more value in the responses of their classmates and their teachers to the work they have produced. The classroom can become a writing laboratory where students practice writing, set goals for themselves and others, and take pride in their work.

The Censors Are Coming

PAUL SLAYTON
Mary Washington College

The grasping hands of unctuous censors are once again casting shadows over library shelves and classrooms in Virginia. From Abingdon in the southwest to King George in the northeast, those who would protect others from the evils that lurk in literature are accosting school and community librarians with demands that books be purged from library shelves. In recent weeks complaints have been lodged against Harold Robbins' *The Lonely Lady*, Philip Roth's *Goodbye Columbus*, Sidney Sheldon's *Bloodline*, and Judy Blume's *Forever*.

It is not contemporary authors alone who offend the sensibilities of the censors. A complainant in Fredericksburg found the Scott Foresman anthology, *United States in Literature*, to be offensive. The specific objection to this textbook included the use of words such as "dam," "hell," and "ain't." The objector also found fault with a passage by F. Scott Fitzgerald describing a brief embrace between a man and a woman. Another author whose word choices were faulted was the venerable Reverend Jonathan Edwards, a colonial Massachusetts clergyman. Works by Walt Whitman, Henry James, O. Henry, Stephen Crane and John Steinbeck also aroused the censorial ire of this parent who is so overwrought that he refuses to allow his child to attend the English class in which the offending textbook is used.

Not since 1974, the year of the notorious Kanawha County, West Virginia censorship debacle—which spawned similar problems with textbooks in Washington and Roanoke Counties—have the news media been so filled with reports of the visitations of censors.

Neither are these censorship phenomena localized in Virginia: Judith B. Krug, director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, reports an upswing in efforts to censor books. She perceives, "The beginning of a major assault which is seriously affecting the ability of schools and libraries to maintain free access to diverse materials representing all points of view."

The current crop of censors are not merely concerned individuals acting solely on their own volition. Would that were so! It is easy to be empathetic toward one whose actions are based upon personally-held principles: school and library personnel should always seek to avoid trampling upon the sensibilities of any individual.

It is, however, a different case when the censor is fronting for any one of the several very powerful, well financed and forcefully led groups, each of which is seeking to become the self-annointed arbiter of American manners and morals. One such group has declared war upon all materials, including pictures, from which it could be inferred that women have roles in society other than those of wife and mother. And from the opposite philosophic pole, a second group decries women being depicted in "stereo-typical" homemaker roles. Other groups, emanating from all points on the political compass, seek to work their particular will and to deny the rights of those who differ. Some kinds of censorship cannot be labeled "good" with other forms being labeled "bad." Censorship is censorship.

The professional credentials of teachers and librarians do not bestow upon them an authority to make unilateral decisions in regard to books to shelve or curriculum materials to be selected. The first amendment confers no arbitrary powers upon anyone. In a democratic system there are legally constituted

procedures both for the selection of materials and for appeals after the fact of selection.

The State Board of Education, under mandate by the Constitution of Virginia to provide educational opportunities for youth throughout the state, has established procedures whereby all concerned-students, parents, educators and other interested persons-may participate in the selection of materials. Local school boards ask, even beg, for community voice in educational decision-making processes and the selection of materials for libraries and classrooms. Public libraries, too, operate openly in a democratic climate under the direction of lay boards of directors. They have stated selection policies subject to citizen input and to the "votes" cast by the book-borrowing public. All individuals and groups have the right and the obligation to make known their opinions and concerns during the selection process. No individual or group can be allowed to exercise a veto power over a decision made in accord with legally constituted procedures. This nay-saying power is exactly what is sought by the censors.

These logical corollaries to the first amendment rights of freedom of expression of all Americans must not be abridged:

- *All persons have the right and the obligation to participate in democratic, legally constituted selection processes of decision making and materials selection at the state and local level.*
- *All students have the right to be assured opportunity to learn without being subjected to indoctrination.*
- *All teachers have the right to be assured the freedom to teach the discipline they were employed to teach, with the concomitant obligation to pursue intellectual discourse in the discipline commensurate with the maturity of the students being taught.*
- *All parents have the right to be assured their moral authority over their children will not be infringed; that their children will be educated, not indoctrinated.*
- *All citizens have the right to be assured that no agency of the state will abridge their right to access to information, nor will the agencies of the state allow other parties to abrogate the inalienable right of citizenship.*

VATE's "Committee against Censorship" is vitally interested in protecting the integrity of the legally constituted programs of study in the schools of Virginia and in assuring that libraries, both school and public, have available the resources to make the "Right-to-Learn" meaningful.

The "Committee against Censorship" is willing to assist schools and libraries in developing materials selection policies and fair appeals procedures. The committee is also prepared to provide consultant services and other forms of assistance without cost to teachers, librarians, schools and school divisions threatened by the spectre of censorship.

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Kenneth L. Donelson and Alleen Pace Nilsen, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1980. Reviewed by Mark G. Gulesian, The College of William and Mary.

Donelson and Nilsen demonstrate that the bastard child of literature has a pedigree, a coat of arms, and a purpose. *Literature for Young Adults* provides readers with the history and background of the young adult book; it demonstrates how these books can be used by English teachers to develop legitimate curriculum. From the notion that today's teenagers can't read (they do: ask those persons with stock in paperback book companies) through the fantasy that teenage books are anti-adult and anti-parent (almost invariably one parent is presented as a strong character) to the canard that young adult literature is less enduring than adult literature (both vary in quality), the authors build the case for a legitimate and important literature.

English teachers are not always comfortable with books read by young adults. They often have not read in the genre; usually have not had college courses in this literature themselves; they may even suspect that the literature is not "good" enough for classroom study. As a result, the very material which is appealing to students is often officially ignored, banished to the shelves of libraries, or used only with students with whom teachers are so desperate they will try anything once.

Not content with merely arguing a philosophical point, Donelson and Nilsen illustrate how young adult books can be used to teach the elements of literature. Plot, theme, character, point of view, tone, setting, style, figurative language and more are discussed in relation to numerous young adult books. Perhaps most entertaining is the section on the history of the young adult book over the past one hundred and eighty years. This brief history documents that young people have always been avid readers; that Howard Pease and Elizabeth Foreman Lewis lead unerringly to Herman Melville and Pearl Buck; and that M. E. Kerr and Paul Zindel are ignored at the peril of the English teacher's credibility and the future of contemporary authors.

The authors offer a thematic treatment of young adult literature, categorizing books under New Realism, Science Fiction, Fantasy and Utopias, and Informational Books, among other topics. Each chapter in this section features discussion, numerous titles as examples, suggestions for evaluating books, and activities to involve students. The information is easy to read and of immediate practical use to the classroom teacher. Further, such topics as sex, racism, moral standards, and censorship are discussed rationally and dispassionately. Finally, the book includes a section of brief interviews with numerous authors of young adult literature; appendices including book selection guides; and an extensive annotated bibliography of books and articles on young adult literature. Anyone in the business of encouraging young adults to read has available a scholarly and readable book to help do it.

Nancy Martin, Pat D'Arcy, Bryan Newton, Robert Parker, *Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum 11-16*. London: Ward Lock Education for the Schools Council, 1980 edition. Reviewed by Ellen T. Griffin, Tuckahoe Middle, Henrico County.

James Britton's investigations into the process of writing in the early 1960's laid the foundation for two research projects by the Schools Council at the London Institute of Education. These projects explored the use of language as a tool for learning. Armed with an awareness that a writer's expectations of audience and task affect how he writes and that different tasks require different language operations, the researchers worked with teachers and students in an effort to understand the complexities of the learning process.

The findings of the first project (1966-1971) are summarized in Chapter I, which focuses on the student's view of the teacher as examiner and the purpose of writing as whatever pleases the teacher. The researchers conclude that teachers *of all subjects* should provide students with a variety of writing purposes and audiences. They also stress the need for teachers to encourage language use for a broad range of thought processes including interpreting, reflecting, thinking creatively, as well as recording, generalising and classifying.

Thus, as the title implies, this is far more than a book on writing aimed at the solitary English teacher. Because the nature of language itself requires the processes of talking, listening, reading, thinking and writing, this book speaks to teachers of all subjects who are interested in helping their students learn more effectively. Its purpose is not to dictate solutions to student writing ills, but to stimulate discussion of language use in schools by teachers throughout the curriculum.

The remaining chapters involve the findings of the second project (1971-76) and include many examples of student talk and writing taken from a variety of subjects including science, history, and English. The relationship between writing and talking as discussed in Chapter II is particularly interesting and thought provoking. Understanding that most students have learned to use talk for a variety of purposes long before they come to school, the researchers suggest that writing that is closer to talk than most school writing currently is should be encouraged in all subject areas.

Subsequent chapters examine both transactional and creative writing and conclude that students should be encouraged to comprehend new information by using it to think. Examples of student talking and writing in which the reader can actually see the flowering of the learning process make a vivid contrast to examples of work in which the student merely repeats what has been read or been told and still fails to comprehend. The authors encourage assignments which can lead students to gain true insights into both themselves and the world.

That the teacher plays a vital role in the learning process none will deny; indeed, the way a teacher views the process will determine how the learners see themselves. The authors do not pretend to have all the answers for stimulating and developing the language process, but in their effort to interest readers in exploring more possibilities for language use they are successful.

Identity series for grades 4-6. New York: Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1979. Reviewed by Patricia H. Duncan, Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Scholastic Identity Series contains 30 paperbacks selected to relate to the frequent concerns of pre-adolescents. The selections range from a few high quality junior novels, such as Hamilton's *Zeely* and Burch's *Queeny Peavy*, to some rather insignificant stories. Several of the latter are rewritten television or movies plays. Familiar themes touch upon problems which confront the pubescent child—friendship, moving, running away, learning one's role and sibling and family relationships. Gangs, trouble with the law, and coping with natural elements are less frequent themes. A few horse and feline stories are added to satisfy animal lovers. Joy Adamson's *Living Free* is the best among this group.

The series is intended for the fourth to sixth grade levels. Challenge and stimulation for the advanced reader should not be sought. A flaw is the paucity of male protagonists among the selections—only ten from the thirty selections. Boys need better representation in this series. One exceptional book is Peggy Mann's *My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel*. This book treats the problems of divorce honestly and intelligently, and, it adds a needed dimension of authenticity to the series.

Team Teaching Writing: A Productive Alternative

ELIZABETH CARROS KEROACK
Melrose, MA

Team teaching once proved its usefulness in basic reading and language instruction; specialized skills areas such as the teaching of writing were assigned only to those individuals well-versed in the subject and dedicated to the value of writing as artistic process. Under these circumstances, the likelihood of two teachers in one department being equally knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the teaching of writing was slim indeed; thus team teaching had no opportunity to demonstrate its potential for success in writing instruction. As more and more emphasis is placed upon written literacy, however, team teaching writing may fulfill new needs. Those English teachers who consider the possibility of team teaching writing should carefully weigh several factors before committing themselves to such a program.

Both individuals should discuss their notions of the nature of writing and of writing instruction. While their conceptions need not be identical, they should be compatible enough to insure mutual cooperation and respect. They should also examine the school system's scheduling practices: Is teaming possible to schedule within the existing structure? Two of the most common varieties of teaming include double period shared instruction (both teachers meeting a class during back-to-back periods) and separate, alternate class instruction (each teacher meeting a class individually during distinct periods). Each of these situations poses special instructional considerations, but can be successfully used to teach writing.

Writing team teachers participate in a partnership that fosters great productivity; what has often seemed an impossibility for one becomes a cooperative reality. For example, the individual teacher is virtually swamped by the amount and diversity of information available on the composition controversy and research on teaching writing. Teaming helps decrease feelings of inadequacy as interaction results in shared knowledge experienced in a supportive atmosphere. Whether dialogue results in the acceptance of new ideas or the strengthening of conventional ones makes little difference; its ultimate value lies in the dynamic interchange sustained by both individuals working toward professional and personal accord.

Teachers can take turns teaching; write along with the students; be more perceptive and thus helpful to students as they realize their own writing problems and potential. Teaming allows for more experimentation with voice, audience, purpose, modes—and offers hope for more effective instruction. Teams can also share critiquing responsibilities, read student work more closely, and confer with students about their writing. Teaming increases potential attention to the writing concerns and abilities of each student.

While the teams acquire instructional support from the partnership, their students enjoy a variety of teacher personality that should help eliminate boredom with course content. Teacher differences in both attitude toward material and the presentation of it help keep students from falling into successful but staid patterns of thinking about writing. Student writers do need to feel the "worth" of writing, which can be achieved by the reinforcement of concepts and skills which occurs in a teaming situation. For students who are no longer instructed by isolated individuals, familiarity breeds confidence rather than contempt.

Facing Up: The Teaching of Grammar

KENNETH BRADFORD
Virginia Dept. of Education

This article is a review, but a rather strange one: The book is excellent, but I don't particularly recommend that everyone read it, since what it says is not new, much of the material has been published elsewhere, and the style is hardly entertaining. *The Role of Grammar in a Secondary School Curriculum* is, however, a work of which every English teacher, administrator, and politician in Virginia should be aware.

In 1968, Jan Barham and Malcolm Wylie, two staff members at Aorere College in New Zealand, began to consider this question: Does the study of grammar in high school English classes have a positive effect on students' learning to write better? They were helped in the course of the study by numerous teachers in Auckland secondary schools.

Part of the impact of this work results from the fact that it comes from a society which has a first-rate school system but which is not under the thumb of the NCTE, the Moral Majority, our textbook publishers, the DAR, or any other of the American groups voicing conflicting and suspected views about the teaching of English. The goal was to discover whether or not what many of us thought was so is indeed so, a classic impetus for honest research.

The research design was simple but comprehensive. Its major purpose was to discover whether students' language development improved as a result of studying grammar, so one group of students used the Oregon English Curriculum (strong in transformational grammar), another group a traditional New Zealand textbook series, *Let's Learn English* (strong in traditional grammar), and the final group used the Oregon Curriculum with extra reading and creative writing (no study of grammar). The study went on for three years. At the end of that period, no significant differences existed among the three groups in terms of competence at such tasks as essay writing, precis writing, and sentence combining. In other words, the study of grammar had done nothing for students' ability to use the language. The evidence is in, and I believe independent study will confirm that I have reported the findings accurately, albeit sketchily.

Now what? For a long time, based on my own classroom experiences and on observations of others at work, I have believed that English teachers teach grammar either because they want to or because they think they ought to. I sometimes wanted to teach it because it was safe, definite, time consuming, and not labor intensive. A stack of fill-in-the-blank grammar quizzes required not only less of my home time but also considerably less searching of my soul. I "know" grammar as it is impossible to "know" writing, and I did not have to practice it to

teach it. I felt that I ought to teach it because the parents wanted it; the principal thought he wanted it; the ghost of Mrs. G, my old twelfth-grade English teacher, muttered for it; and even the students seemed stolidly to expect it, like the colds that would come with the winter.

I'm not sure we can continue to behave like this and sleep well at night. A doctor who tried to use leeches on her patients today might find herself in some difficulties, personally and professionally. On the other hand, doctors have been enabled to abandon the use of leeches because they now use more effective treatments. If we abandon the teaching of grammar, we'll have to do something else to improve writing. The newer, and I believe improved, methods are available to most of us, largely through the Virginia Writing Project and similar approaches. But the will to look at our present practices and honestly attempt to develop different and more effective practices is available to us only through our own sense of professional responsibility.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ENGLISH JOURNAL editors Ken Donelson and Alleen Nilsen request manuscripts from teachers. Please communicate with them at the College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281 . . . Film guides on "Tribute" are available free from Hal Sherman, 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation, 40 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019. . . Congratulations to Jack Maxwell, the new NCTE Executive Director, and to Bob Hogan who devoted twelve years to that position. . . . NCTE has named a 1980 Prominent researchers Lillian Bridwell, Colette Daiute, and Ann Matsuhashi. . . . Two conferences of interest to teachers will take place this summer. For information, contact the English departments at Radford and Longwood.

From the Executive Secretary

EDITOR'S NOTE: Foster B. Gresham retired as VATE Executive Secretary June 30, 1977. In these excerpts from his last column, Foster addressed some of his concerns and hopes for VATE. For the full text, please see the Spring 1977 issue.

The year 1977 marks the fiftieth anniversary of my beginning full-time teaching...

During this time I have seen the pendulum swing away from the teacher's emphasizing of high ethical principles to the eliciting of student concepts of current human behavior, from the influence of religious teachings to the influence of secularism, from the inspiring of patriotism to the teacher's maintaining an attitude of indifference or the generating of hostile criticism toward our free enterprise way of life. And I perhaps futilely hope for the opposite swing to begin.

I have also seen the pendulum swing from a very low professional interest on the part of English teachers prior to World War II to a much greater professionalism thereafter. Judging from the drop in VATE membership during the last few years, however, one might conclude that the pendulum of subject-matter professionalism is on the reverse swing. The emphasis in educational professionalism seems now to be centered upon salaries, benefits, and class-loads (all important in the teachers' welfare) with less emphasis on the teaching of the individual subjects; and, the abandonment of district meetings, which had departmental sessions, has been devastating to professional attention to subject matter, especially in the larger rural areas. How VATE can reestablish the professionalism that was evident in our peak-membership year of 1971 is a problem now facing the Executive Committee.

Most of you who are reading this have maintained your interest by your continued membership in VATE, and we welcome those who have become new members this session. We need, however, to reach the other thousands of college, secondary, and elementary teachers, for VATE needs their support and they need VATE. The more members, the greater the income; the greater the income, the better the services VATE can provide its members...

Even without outside funding, VATE committees have brought matters to the attention of the State Department of Education with favorable results for the benefit of English teachers; representatives of VATE have appeared at legislative hearings to present the problems of English teaching; VATE has held fall conferences and regional meetings and provided over three hundred of its members for committees hosting the 1969 NCTE Convention in Washington, D.C.; and through the sharing of dues it has enabled affiliates to secure speakers and hold workshops...

You are the key to the extent of VATE's progress. In recent years VATE has attracted national attention because of its large membership, its affiliate-structured organization, its publication of an affiliate handbook, and its varied successful activities in spite of its low annual dues. At least two VATE officers were invited to NCTE workshops in other sections of the nation to tell "the VATE story." If VATE is to maintain its leadership among the state organizations, you must continue to be or become involved. How?

VATE is looking for dedicated English teachers of all levels to serve on committees, to spark interest in the inactive affiliates, to reach out for members among those who have not realized that a strong professional English organization depends upon its members—thousands of them! Thousands of loyal, dedicated English teachers who participate, who talk VATE to new teachers, and who invite them into membership and involvement in local and state activity! How then could we fail?

When I was elected president of VATE for the year 1951, I wrote for the first *Virginia English Bulletin* an article which began, "Let's Talk plainly." We had to! There were only thirty-nine teachers belonging to VATE at the time of my election. Thirty-nine! Yet those who were elected with me were dedicated teachers who were willing to meet the challenge of hard work to increase the membership, publish a bulletin, and develop VATE into a strong, active professional organization that would be concerned with the improvement of the teaching of English in Virginia...

Now it is time to "talk plainly" again. The fact that there has been no lapse in its activities and influence is an indication that VATE is strong in its leadership and in the willingness of committee members to serve voluntarily and at their own expense to achieve its goals. The problem of continuing future progress is that of dwindling membership which, because of the low annual dues, limits the income necessary to carry on its services.

...I gave to the Executive Committee at its January meeting my resignation as executive secretary, the resignation to become effective June 30. My twenty-five years of association with VATE people has been a richly rewarding experience (with more "ups" than "downs"), and it was with nostalgic regard that I turned in my resignation.

The Executive Committee has appointed Leon Williams to be the new executive secretary, and I could not wish for a better successor. Let me close the writing of this column with best wishes to you, Leon, and a plea to the rest of you to give him your wholehearted support. His success will depend upon the cooperation you give him.

Young Authors in the Elementary Classroom

DONALD COOK, *Principal*
Hawkins Elementary, Brighton, Mich.

Most students are looking for sources of motivation by which they may attain achievement. They are looking for challenge along with excitement and meaningfulness to stimulate and sustain their various learning efforts. "Young Authors" is an effort to provide for such curricular enthusiasm.

Our "Young Authors in the Elementary Classroom" is an incentive-based curricular program. It seeks to give students the "want" to achieve in the literary arts. It is intended to sustain long-term motivation, not just yield a short-term activity.

Because of the number of people involved in "Young Authors," its organization begins early in the school year. Organizational responsibility is delegated to the school's parent group. Since many of the related tasks must be done during the school hours, parents normally have fewer time constraints than school personnel.

A joint meeting is held with both parent and teacher representatives, and theme for Young Authors' Day is determined. Recent themes have included fairy tales, folk heroes, animals and children. Arrangements are made for contacting a publisher of children's books to attain the one-day services of a professional author and an illustrator. A letter is then sent to all parents: 1.) informing them of the planned Young Authors' Day and 2.) soliciting parent volunteers to function as activity leaders or group guides.

Once the date, parent volunteers, professional author and illustrator have been attained, the classroom teachers engage their students in related learning experiences. For example, older students may write their own stories whereas very young students may have stories read to them. Whatever the learning medium, these efforts serve to build an interest and anticipation in Young Authors' Day.

The Young Authors' Day requires a two-hour time period. Here, the students are placed in three large groups: K-1, 2-3 and 4-5. Each of these groups spends approximately half an hour in session with: 1.) the professional author, 2.) the professional illustrator and 3.) a parent activity leader.

The author and illustrator usually have their own preplanned information packages showing how stories are written and pictorialized. For the activity sessions, the students are divided into eight-member sub-groups. Within each sub-group the volunteer parent/activity leaders and group guides, often in appropriate costume, present a pre-selected story followed by such hands-on experiences as the creation of puppets, drawings, and cookery.

At the conclusion of the Young Authors' Day all the participants assemble for treats and mementoes from the author and illustrator. In the days to follow, teachers use the impact of the Young Authors' Day to engage the students in related experiences designed to take advantage of and sustain motivation in learning.